UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

# "I Feel Confident Most of the Time":

# A Study of the Relationships Between Writing Transfer, Dispositions Toward Learning and Writing, and Perceptions of Classroom Contexts

A Dissertation Submitted

in Partial Satisfaction of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

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Acknowledgements

The research and writing of this project would not have been possible without the support of various very important humans.

I offer thanks to Ref Rodriguez and Nik Orlando. Each of you has always supported my scholarly and personal growth. You knew me first as a fresh-faced 8th grade teacher. It has been a true joy to witness your relentless dedication to educational quality and access for all young people in Los Angeles.

Thank you to Irene Clark, who was the first scholar to expose me to theories of genre and composition. I've never looked back.

I want to thank my most excellent friend Susannah McGowan who read and provided useful feedback on early drafts of this project.

This research was inspired by the hundreds of students I have worked with and learned from over time, especially those from Constellation Middle School and CALS Charter Middle and Early College High Schools, many of whom are now college graduates and teachers themselves.

I am greatly indebted to the seven students who volunteered to participate in this project. I thank them for their time and generosity, and for their willingness to let me ask them pesky and repetitive questions about their attitudes toward academic learning and writing.

Thank you to Chuck Bazerman, who offered various possible answers to questions that he then asked me to pose. I have really enjoyed playing academic Jeopardy with you.

I am grateful to Karen Lunsford for serving as an ever-present and supportive adviser to me during my years in the PhD program at UCSB and for providing me with multiple professional and academic opportunities on campus (and beyond).

Super serious and never-ending gratitude goes to Linda Adler-Kassner who is a consistent cheerleader and spiritual guide-- and who provided an extensive critical eye to this work. You are a true mentor, model, and friend.

Thank you to all sorts of parents: my own, Laurie and Monty, who love to wear their UCSB shirts and brag about their daughter's scholarly qualities. To my in-laws, Jean and Walt, who never failed to step in with offers of childcare and a quiet room in which to write.

This project is dedicated to my brilliant and amazing daughter who was born just around the time that this project was. You are my best teacher.

And endless, endless thanks to John for living with and loving me—and for reminding me of permanent vacation. This work is also dedicated to you.

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ABSTRACT

"I Feel Confident Most of the Time":

A Study of the Relationships Between Writing Transfer, Dispositions Toward Learning and Writing, and Perceptions of Classroom Contexts

by

Lisa Tremain

As recently as 2012, Elizabeth Wardle called for writing studies researchers to give "attention to the dispositions that students are embodying across fields and consider how the nature of those dispositions can either inhibit or enhance their ability to engage in the expansive learning and repurposing that I understand to constitute 'transfer' of writing related knowledge" (p. 11). In responding to this call in the research, this dissertation project applies a dispositional lens to writing transfer as it occurs in specific contexts for learning. While theories concerning the connection between writing transfer and dispositions have been initially explored (Driscoll and Wells, 2012; Wardle, 2012), this connection has not yet been empirically and comprehensively examined. This project attempts such empirical and comprehensive examination of these connections through an analysis of data through a conceptual model that seeks to both capture and examine the relationships between dispositions, writing transfer, and contexts for learning. In order to begin to understand the relationships between transfer, dispositions, and learning contexts, the qualitative and empirical nature of this study presents findings that reveal the conceptual model in action from the actor's—or learner's perspective.

This dissertation uncovers the self-perceptions of seven individual learners in relation

to writing transfer as they move across the high school to college transition and encounter particular contexts for writing. Findings from this project suggest that the discovery and evaluation of one's prior knowledge includes dispositional elements, including self-efficacy and self-regulation. Meanwhile, dispositions and prior knowledge are also elicited in specific ways within the contexts in which transfer is expected to occur. Interview data revealed how participants applied their dispositions as agents of their own learning as they moved into new post-secondary learning and writing contexts. Furthermore, it revealed how participants' dispositions transferred across the high school to college transition and the specific contexts within them, and how dispositions informed participants' transfer of prior knowledge and/or application of new knowledge. Specifically, the movement (or lack of movement) across the transfer "steps" of *detect* and *elect* for participants suggests that the process of transfer involves more than the single act of moving knowledge across contexts. In taking a broader view of transfer through a *D-E-C-Enculturation* perspective, this study reveals how transfer is highly bound up with dispositions, particularly self-efficacy, and how dispositions interact with a *detection* of prior knowledge and a decision-making *election* of whether or not to transfer and/or transform prior knowledge in the new context. Self-efficacy and other dispositions particularly impacted how such decision-making took place for subjects in this study.

Finally, this project views dispositions through a conceptual model of transfer that looks not only at what prior knowledge students *connect* to new writing tasks and contexts, but also to *how* they *detect* and *elect* to pursue their connections to prior knowledge and how they are *enculturated* into academic communities. Thus, in pursuing

research on the relationship between dispositions and transfer, I have attempted to locate *where* learning dispositions factor in the student's experiences and perspectives of transfer using Perkins and Salomon's (2012) *detect-elect-connect* framework for learning transfer, to which I have added the fourth step of *enculturation*.

As extensive research on learning dispositions leading up to this project has argued, dispositions are always elicited in particular *contexts.* But, as this research also shows, dispositions can work broadly as they are carried into and out of contexts by individuals. Contexts also embody particular conditions and dispositions of *field* to which individual dispositions *attune*. This concept of individuals' attunement to communities or contexts for learning reveal the shaping and constructing nature of context and how individual dispositions may be enacted in learning or writing transfer. Ultimately, findings from this project suggest that further research on the connections between dispositions, contexts, and a D-E-C-*Enculturation* view of transfer can help classroom practitioners, learning theorists, and composition researchers more deeply consider the roles that dispositions play in learning and writing transfer.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

There is an unavoidable and distinct change for students as they leave behind K-12 schooling and move into college-level learning. This moment is one that Beach (2003) has called a "consequential transition," one where individuals must transform skills, knowledge, and identity from one type of social organization to another. This transformation requires students to suss out how learning occurs in new-to-them post-secondary contexts and, as I argue in this dissertation, depends on one's orientation to and engagement in this new social milieu. Specifically, in terms of their writing development, as students encounter the secondary-to-post-secondary transition, to varying degrees, they will "size up" what they know about writing from previous learning contexts, determine what they deem useful and attempt to assess what they need to know in these new academic writing situations.

The move to adapt prior knowledge is considered an act of *transfer* -- that is, what and how knowledge transfers from learning situation to learning situation. The complexities involved in writing transfer across contexts has been researched in a few seminal studies: Reiff and Bawarshi (2011), who argued that prior writing knowledge acts as a resource for writers, but is best used flexibly; Sommers and Saltz (2004) who suggested that college writers develop more quickly when they view themselves as novices; Robertson, Taczak and Yancey (2012), who found that students often enter college writing situations with *absent* prior knowledge, and Wardle (2007, 2009, & 2012), who has considered the

disciplinary nature of writing itself and how it moves (or doesn't) across contexts. Each of these studies and various others on writing transfer have provided fresh and complex views of writing transfer that have affected how researchers and theorists conceptualize it. However, an understanding of how (or whether) students orient themselves attitudinally toward opportunities to transfer prior writing knowledge to new learning situations and how these attitudes facilitate or inhibit transfer—particularly across the transition from high school to college— has been under-explored in transfer scholarship. This project seeks to explore this phenomena.

An attitudinal or intrapersonal orientation to the writing transfer opportunity involves that the dispositions that learners carry into the experience. *Dispositions* in this study specifically refer to learners' intrapersonal orientations to learning in terms of transfer tasks and contexts. A definition of dispositions as intrapersonal allows me to understand how they work from the actor's perspective in relationship to the actions associated with knowledge transfer and helps reveal emotional orientations to learning that are not often explored in relation to it. One of the first studies to explore dispositions toward learning in relationship to writing transfer was Driscoll and Wells (2012). While they acknowledge that rhetorical context—the writing situation, classroom discourses, and pedagogical practices-- has been extensively explored in scholarship on writing transfer, their research highlights the role of the individual and his or her dispositions in undertaking and performing a writing task and argues that these factors are at least or as equally important as the classroom or educational context and/or the transfer of prior knowledge. Driscoll and Wells point out that writing transfer theorists have not always considered the learner's agency, or, in particular, what dispositional attitudes the learner

brings with him to the transfer opportunity. They suggest that the research on transfer has primarily characterized the learner as a passive agent, as someone *to* whom or *through* whom transfer happens rather than one who enacts transfer (par. 9). They want to extend the current research on transfer to include an exploration of learners' applications of dispositional attitudes toward writing situations, which is what this project proposes to take up. Driscoll and Wells argue that an exploration of dispositions can reveal practices that "allow" or "prevent" transfer from taking place, since "they are a critical foundation upon which learning is built" (par. 46).

The call for additional research on individual dispositions as part of the transfer process echoes Elizabeth Wardle's (2012) questions regarding where and how transfer happens. Her questions articulate some of the struggles researchers have in seeking to define transfer: "Is transfer found in the individual, in the task, in the setting—or in combination of all three? And if transfer is found in the combination of individual, task, and setting, how do we understand and explain it?" (p. 2). While Driscoll and Wells present a case for exploring the dispositional factors that the individual learner uses as she navigates various contexts for learning and writing, Wardle posits that transfer results when particular dispositions are "inhabited" by both the individuals and the *fields* in which the new learning context occurs. Wardle uses Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* to argue that an individual encountering a "consequential transition" must be (or become) aware of the *doxa* or hegemonies of the *field* (or larger learning context) and either practice the beliefs of the field or work to change them. Her findings suggest that "high road" or "boundary-crossing" transfer-- that is, transfer of knowledge where prior knowledge is highly abstracted, reconfigured, and reapplied to promote learning in the

new context-- results when particular dispositions are inhabited by both the individual and the *field. Field* is Wardle's term-- via Bourdieu-- for a political, social, or economic system (e.g. an educational system).

Bourdieu and scholars of his work on *habitus* view dispositions as individually interpreted and enacted, but dispositions are also encoded and enacted tacitly through social processes of participation and harmonization within communities of practice (CoPs) (Lave and Wenger, 1991). CoPs—the specific contexts we encounter where local and global beliefs are brought to bear upon individuals as participants--- "have some common and continuing organization, values, understanding, history, and practices" (Rogoff, 1990, p. 80). Taylor (1999) has termed the process of participation in and harmonization with CoPs as "rule following," where rules are represented differently by individuals, but the "rule-as-represented [is] defining an underlying structure" in the class habitus—or the CoP (p. 39). If this is the case, then dispositions (for example about writing or going to college) are socially created and adapted, encoded and enacted according to the values of the CoP. These values are always constructed and reconstructed at both local and global levels-- through shifting memberships, social and cultural definitions of context-specific beliefs and practices, and economic and political policies that trickle down to local levels of schooling—in effect, to the student applying his or her processes and practices of writing for a school-based task.

These views of *habitus* and communities of practice are grounded in social theories of learning that can illuminate how and why an individual exhibits particular dispositions toward learning and/or writing as she navigates various contexts. Social theories of learning emphasize that an individual learner cannot be separated from the context(s) in

which she learns and that learning itself is a social experience constructed through participation in the lived world (Wenger, 1998). Working with this assumption, the scholarship of Rogoff (1990), Lave (1991), Lave and Wenger (1991), Bazerman (1994), Freedman and Adam (1996), and Wenger (1998) has foregrounded views of learning as fundamentally social and contextual; that is, learning is *situated* and it occurs in *communities of practice*. As Wenger notes, "communities of practice are everywhere" in both explicit and implicit ways (p. 6). Meaning-- and therefore learning-- cannot occur in isolation; it can never be boiled down to a context-less interaction.

Individual participation involves learning that is constituted by the *practice(s)* that a community values, engages in, and negotiates. Learners within a CoP move on their own *trajectories of practice* from novice toward expert, roles that are defined (and constantly re-defined) by the CoP. They negotiate meaning through the "duality" of participation and reification of practice. While participation is a more flexible experience where identities, influences, and interpretations help shape the meanings that individuals and the CoP enact, these meanings fit into and often reproduce or reflect larger social structures, such as institutional, political, or cultural norms (Wenger, 1998). Wenger has argued that "we produce meanings that extend, redirect, dismiss, reinterpret, modify or confirm-- in a word, negotiate anew-- the histories of meanings of which they are a part" (p. 52-3). Thus, learners experience the world through a negotiation of meaning where beliefs are developed and re-developed through social participation.

In classroom-based CoPs, such as the writing or first year composition (FYC) classrooms, novice members learn and develop particular memberships, practices and development toward expertise much differently-- and perhaps much less clearly-- than a

novice might as an apprentice toward a workplace skill, as described in studies presented by social learning theorists (e.g. Rogoff's (1990) study of the Efe community in Zaire or Wenger's (1998) stories of novice claims processors as they enter this profession.). As the focus of this study concerns classroom-based academic writing and the transition for academic writers as they move from high school to college, it is important to note that in places like the first year composition (FYC) classroom, writing expertise is an elusive concept. As Wardle (2009) has noted, in FYC students often write in "mutt genres" and multiple genres and the course itself has been criticized in research as lacking a specific disciplinary discourse community. Additionally, Wardle's study found that students could not identify goals for writing that moved beyond the course itself, posing a problem for both developing expertise and transfer as part of that development. Beaufort (2007) suggests that, in general, "there is no such thing as writing expertise," but rather, citing Bazerman (1994) "individual expert writing performances" (p. 17). Nevertheless, even if the boundaries for writing expertise aren't entirely clear in terms of FYC discourse (and they may never be), learning within any classroom where writing is occurs is still highly situated in the local context and according to the roles played by those who participate in shaping it—learners, instructors, administrators, and policy makers.

In terms of transfer, individual students will necessarily bring both knowledge and practices to their new writing experiences and college course CoPs based on membership other in COPs, for better or for worse. Thus, Wardle's discussion of how dispositions are enacted in both individual *bodies* and *fields* brings together Driscoll and Wells' attention to individual agency as a component of transfer and Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's (1991) examinations of communities of practice as a social theory of learning. An

investigation exploring how an individual's attitudes toward her own writing development affects writing transfer can provide a more focused picture of what successful writing transfer can looks like. Since writers do not produce text in a vacuum, they enter into contexts for writing at some level of apprenticeship, with differing forms of individual agency, different attitudes toward writing, and different types of and processes for applying prior knowledge. Writers who are learning to write necessarily create texts and themselves in context, using the resources that they have access to at hand and displaying the characteristics that constitute their identities; these are both shaped by each learner's individual history and experiences with language in its various forms.

But while questions about how different types of learning dispositions facilitate or inhibit writing transfer and where these dispositions "show up" in the transfer experience are critical for a more robust picture of transfer to develop, including the ways in which they intersect with the context or habitus for learning, these have been underexplored in the research literature to date (Hamilton, et al, 2013; Wardle, 2012; Driscoll and Wells, 2012). Perkins and Solomon (2012) have presented a fresh—and more comprehensive--view of transfer through the framework of *detect-elect-connect* that provides a structure for studying the interactions between dispositions and transfer in context. They argue that most research on learning transfer focuses on the idea of *connect*, where knowledge from one learning opportunity transfers in a fruitful way to another learning opportunity. This moment of *connecting* knowledge from one context to another and *how* it is adapted, repurposed, or applied in this moment has been the major focal point for the majority of research on writing transfer until recently. The study of how learners connect their prior

knowledge and use it anew in different learning situations has made sense in transfer research, since it shows when transfer occurred, what transferred, and what didn't. But Perkins and Salomon have widened the perspective of the transfer experience to consider acts of *detecting* opportunities to transfer knowledge and *electing* to pursue them as equally important as the actual moment of *connection*. When a learner has the opportunity to consider prior knowledge and see how and whether it applies to a new learning situation, that learner is, in Perkins' and Salomons' view, *detecting* possible connections. Next, however, the learner needs to *elect* whether or not to pursue and apply connections to knowledge in the new learning context. Both of these steps, which precede the *connect* moment, imply that in addition to knowledge transfer, particular learning orientations are also at work, such as evaluation, efficacy, and task value. Perkins' and Salomon's framework provides some distinct clues to how learning dispositions function in the transfer opportunity.

*Detecting* an opportunity to transfer is predicated on the idea that the surface properties in the new learning context are visible to the learner and that she is able to see the benefit of retrieving prior knowledge relative to that opportunity. Just because a student misses an opportunity to transfer does not mean that the student does not carry the appropriate prior knowledge to actually detect it, though that might be the case. In fact, a student may *detect* that the properties of a new learning context recall prior knowledge, but she may not necessarily *elect* to pursue the connection between contexts. These transfer "steps" of *detect* and *elect,*not only reveal a more comprehensive cognitive experience of how knowledge transfers across contexts, they also illuminate how the decision-making involved in a transfer opportunity taps into learners' values, evaluative processes, and

self-confidence. It is the investigation of how these dispositional factors of learning are elicited within the more comprehensive framework of *detect-elect-connect* which I take up in this study.

In considering how the learning context interacts with this framework, Perkins and Solomon (2012) differentiate between a *culture of demand* and a *culture of opportunity,* arguing that orientations toward learning—whether facilitative or inhibitive—are elicited through the "culture" of the classroom and, perhaps, the institution. Also focusing on the learning context, Wardle's (2012) discussion of *doxa* describes how different educational "fields" and bodies within these fields can inhabit either a "finding/answering/moving on" disposition toward learning (that is, a doxa that promotes seeking a "correct" answer) or an "asking questions/ exploring problems" disposition—and these *field* dispositions inform learners orientations to knowledge transfer and learning itself. Driscoll and Wells (2012) provide a perspective of transfer that details learning dispositions as distinct from but integrated in knowledge transfer and identify specific dispositional habits (e.g. value, self-efficacy, attribution, and self-regulation) that are exhibited by individual learners. Their view considers the dispositions that learners *bring* to the writing transfer context. Brent (2011), similarly, focuses on the ways that dispositions are used by individuals, underscoring individual "reflection" as a foundational to other dispositional qualities, such as "mindful abstraction" and "active experimentation" (p. 413). He argues that reflexivity is an essential step that leads a learner to display other dispositional qualities. What brings these particular studies together is their novel focus on learning orientations-- or dispositions-- as an important part of the transfer opportunity.

In this study, I focus on the individual learner: how specific students talk about and

apply dispositions as agents of their own learning as they move into new post-secondary learning contexts as writers and first year college students. In this exploration, I seek to align my discussion of dispositions with those described and/or promoted in the current literature in order to make important connections between dispositions, contexts, and transfer. That is, while my study does look at individual learners' dispositions and how these dispositions inform opportunities for writing transfer, I also explore how and whether their dispositions are elicited in specific contexts for writing. Specifically, I explore the learning dispositions students display in relation to post-secondary academic writing tasks and contexts, and frame these dispositions within the larger communities of practice in which writing situations and *doxa* exist.

As current research on writing transfer has suggested that dispositions cannot be separated from transfer and, therefore, learning, the goal of this study is to empirically examine the relationship between dispositions toward writing and writing transfer in terms of how they facilitate or inhibit transfer within specific writing contexts. In order to operationalize this theory, I expand on the Perkins' and Salomon's (2012) framework of detect-elect-connect (D-E-C) and consider which types of dispositions learners display at each step in D-E-C process of knowledge transfer and how they are displayed. I also examine the degree to which described or demonstrated dispositions are elicited by each participant in relation to his or her perceptions of the contexts for writing.

I draw upon Bourdieu's theories of social practice and *habitus* and Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory in order to explore the tensions between individual dispositional agency and local social expectations and interactions of communities of practice. This project seeks to understand the degree to which writing transfer occurs in relation to these

tensions. In presenting the findings in Chapter 5, I organize particular categories of dispositions toward learning in a conceptual model that extends the D-E-C framework and operationalizes the ways that dispositions can positively or negatively affect each step in the D-E-C transfer opportunity. To test the model, I draw on interview data from seven students from three different data points: the second semester of the 12th grade school year and the first and second semesters of participants' first year of college across four different post-secondary institutions. Currently, few studies have attempted to explore the ways in which high school students perceive the degree to which their academic writing knowledge maps onto the writing situations they encounter after high school. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature associated with examinations of how learners use dispositions to aid them in relation to context-specific writing opportunities. The research questions that guide this study are:

- What learning dispositions and habits of response to writing tasks do students exhibit or describe in both high school and college-level writing-focused classes?
- How do dispositions toward writing and learning to write transfer across the high school to college transition?
- What generative dispositions facilitate either new knowledge or transfer of knowledge in academic writing situations?
- What disruptive dispositions inhibit new learning or transfer of prior knowledge for them?
- To what extent do students mobilize learning dispositions in local or

specific writing situations order to detect connections to prior knowledge? To what extent do students elect to pursue these connections?

- What is the perceived impact of specific post-secondary learning contexts on these learners' dispositions?

I begin this investigation with a review of literature that explores the scholarship about writing transfer, dispositions, and contexts for learning and which begins to draw connections across this scholarship.

# Chapter 2: Review of Literature

## *Introduction*

The literature review that follows is organized so that it highlights the history of the two major focal points of this study -- transfer and dispositions-- in educational research. It seeks to show the coordinations and disjunctions across these subjects of study, such that a gap in the research-- which is addressed in the focus of this study-- is made apparent. In the first section of the Literature Review, I discuss the history of and current conversations regarding research on and theories of transfer of writing knowledge, with a particular focus on prior knowledge as part of the transfer of learning equation. This discussion highlights the importance of *context* in the transfer opportunity but balances the focus on context with research that presents particular *general principles of writing knowledge* as an approach to understanding how to teach for transfer as well as heuristically frame individual writing development. In the second half of the chapter, I focus on the ways that educational and writing researchers have defined and operationalized dispositions as part of the transfer process and describe the extent to which a focus on dispositions as part of the writing transfer equation has been explored in writing transfer research. I also present research that has explored the ways in which dispositions are enacted in CoPs and transfer opportunities, with a focus on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* as used by various transfer researchers to show how various types of dispositional *habits* are formed.

Throughout this discussion, I hope to underscore the ways that the research points to

the intersections between deeply situated contexts for writing, the prior knowledge that a writer brings to the transfer opportunity, and the individual agency that learners bring to transfer through their dispositions. Current scholarship on writing transfer has not fully explored the ways in which learner orientations might facilitate or impede the transfer opportunity, including learner agency, learner identity and learning dispositions (Bereiter, 1995; Nowacek, 2011; Driscoll and Wells, 2012; Wardle, 2012). This gap in the research provides the rationale for this dissertation project.

*Defining Transfer*

According to Beach (2003), culturally-held constructions of transfer of learning have persisted over time due to their associations with traditional notions of education and schooling. Most people assume that through teacher-student interactions and classroom-based events, students *should* be able to transfer their learning from one context to another. However, Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström (2003) and Brent (2012) have provided overviews of research on transfer that have described a *lack* of learning transfer across tasks or evidence. These studies suggest that while transfer might occur, it is often limited to situations that are distinctly similar to the original learning context(s). Such findings have led to new questions concerning transfer: How does transfer occur across *dissimilar* contexts or tasks, if at all? What impacts transfer across disciplines or settings, such as school and work? As researchers have attempted to explore transfer, they have also reimagined transfer it as an act of *reconceptualization* (Nowacek, 2011), *repurposing* (Wardle, 2007), *lamination* (Prior and Shipka, 2003), or *assemblage* (Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey, 2012), to name only a few. In addition, the transfer phenomenon has been extensively reconsidered and explained through social theories of learning, specifically

situated in learning theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991), distributed cognition (Rogoff, 1990) and learning as it occurs in communities of practice (COP) (Wenger, 1998).

In this chapter, I situate current views of transfer that argue that it is a context-rich and deeply situated activity. I also explore how the history of transfer research has given way to new social theories of learning that discuss how transfer always occurs in *communities of practice.* To situate my own study, I highlight research on *writing transfer* and consider various studies that have explored how and for whom it does or does not occur, as well as pedagogical frameworks that can guide writing transfer and development. Ultimately, this discussion brings us up to the current moment in transfer research: the space that calls for a focus on dispositions and how individual attitudes toward writing factor into the writing transfer opportunity.

### *A Brief History of Learning Transfer*

Some of the first studies of transfer defined and studied it as knowledge learned in one place, one time and one location which was then applied in another place, time and location. Commonly cited early research on learning transfer often references Thorndike's (1924) studies, which focused on the idea that transfer best occurs when "identical elements" are present between original learning and the transfer opportunity. Thorndike's findings implied that the sequencing of curriculum would provide the best-case scenario for successful transfer of learning (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström, 2003, p. 20). Thorndike's research on transfer of learning is often contrasted to Judd's (1939), which argued that general principles can be moved from one learning situation to another, and, in fact, "deep structures and general principles [...are the...] foundation of transfer"

(Tuomi-Grohn and Engstrom, p. 21). However, a criticism of both Thorndike's and Judd's theories is that they did not take the "real world" and its contexts into account.

Later research on transfer argued for a cognitive view of this phenomenon (Bransford et al., 1983). The cognitive view referenced Judd's argument regarding the presence of "deep structures" as facilitating learning. It posited that appropriate schema must be necessarily applied in a successful transfer experience while it also emphasized learners' use of metacognition in the application of schema. Other scholarship (Lave, 1988; Carraher, 1986; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Freedman and Adam, 1996) reacted to and criticized the cognitive view, complicating it and earlier studies of transfer to argue that there are always various and overlapping contexts which occur in any given transfer opportunity, including (but not limited to): individual memberships in and across various learning communities, relationships between learners and instructors, instructional methods, classroom environment, learner affordances, skills or practices, instructional tasks, agency and dispositions of learners, and the chronotonicity (or moments in time) of transfer opportunities. Such a layering of contexts assumes any transfer event as highly distinctive and unique.

At the least, the most current research on writing transfer has shown that context(s) affects the degree-- even the possibility—to which transfer of learning *may* happen (Perkins and Salomon, 1989; Freedman and Adam, 1996; Brent, 2012). The importance of how contexts affect learning have been taken up widely in general transfer and writing transfer research, which I discuss later in this literature review. It has been argued, for example, that some learning contexts may be more likely to facilitate transfer than others and, in fact, much of the current literature has been critical of institutional school-based

contexts as *not* particularly facilitative of transfer. Hager and Hodkinson (2009) have argued that transfer studies have focused too much on the educational context, partially reinforcing the notion that the learner is a "vessel" to be filled with new knowledge and ignoring that the learning is "a relational web, a process of ongoing change […] Learning is transactional in that it changes both the learner and the context, viewed both widely and narrowly" (p. 631). In this view, transfer is a mediational process between learner and environment-- and both are constructed (or re-constructed) by it.

Still, culturally-dominant notions of learning and knowledge production continue to highlight a "vessel" concept of individual experience which measures performance of learning through pre-constructed standards and assumes that specific classroom-based, teacher-student structures constitute learning. These views have created a gap in understandings of learning that has given way to studies in psychology, anthropology, and education (e.g. Hager and Hodkinson, 2009) which argue, instead, that learning often takes place *outside* of school and that all learning is distinctly social in nature (Rogoff, 1990; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). I take up these social theories of learning in the following section.

*Communities of Practice*

Social theories of learning argue that the individual cannot be separated from the context(s) in which learning takes place. As Wenger (1998) has argued, learning is a social experience that is constructed by learners through participation in the "lived world." Wenger's theory posits that learning happens in *communities of practice* (CoPs), where learning occurs as a negotiation of meaning between participants, context, and expectations and where particular practices, beliefs, or structures are reified through

participant experience. Participation, however, is flexible, since learners' individual identities, influences, and interpretations help shape the meanings that they use in practice and which the CoP may (or may not) enact as part of its own identity. At the same time, "successfully" learned skills or knowledge most often fit into and reproduce or reflect the larger social structures-- those institutional, political, or cultural norms that shape identities and CoPs over time.

From this perspective, individuals experience the world-- they *learn*-- by *negotiating meaning* in particular communities. Learning is a process of participation in CoP practices and a reification of CoP beliefs, whether we are actively present in or away from them. Even if I am alone, hiking through the forest, for example, and come across an empty animal trap, my moral, ecological, and practical understandings of the animal trap are constituted by the values I have formed by participating within particular communities of practice-- perhaps through my political memberships, family structures, online learning, or any number of groups. Therefore, I do not have to be physically present in a CoP in order to practice or apply-- that is, transfer--- the beliefs or knowledge I have developed by participating within them.

I may return from hiking to have dinner with friends and report my encounter with the animal trap. What I say, our discussion about this experience-- its trajectories and interpretations-- are also characterized by participation and reification in the CoP. Participation and reification are, according to Wenger, complimentary dual processes that "take place together" (p. 66). While reification denotes that an understanding (of a concept or a value, for example) is given a form that comes to constitute a belief on the part of the individual-- let's say that animal traps are ecologically destructive-- that

understanding is constantly being negotiated through participation. As Wenger notes, participation in this understanding does not need to be harmonious-- or agreed upon-- among members in a CoP. We may disagree about the moral or ecological value of setting an animal trap and may turn to experts to guide our views; we may even have conflicting views of whether or not a woman should hike alone. Whatever meanings we make are negotiated through living in the world, through involvement in social communities, and they are developed in the context "of the forms of our membership" in them (p. 57). This connects to and matters for writing development and pedagogy because classrooms are communities of practice in which, as Freedman and Adam (1996) have argued, learning takes place "through active processes (in this case, writing), [is] guided by mentors, and [is mediated] through cultural tools" (p. 409). However, as Freedman and Adam note, there is a "striking difference" between (writing) classrooms and workplace or social communities of practice, since there is a value placed on the learner, learning, and individualism in the university culture as opposed to the "more collaborative ethos" of non-classroom COPs (p. 420).

Nevertheless, it is important to understand collaborative ethos in the COP model, whether present or not in the classroom. Rogoff's (2003) idea of "distributed cognition" expands upon Wenger's social theory of learning via CoPs by clarifying that knowing is a collaborative process that is *distributed* across people as they work together with the resources and apply the practices of the community. It presents the perspective that human development and learning is a "process of transformation of participation in sociocultural activities" (p. 271). Thus, learning is a collaborative activity that happens across time, space, and individuals within the CoP. Furthermore, as Windsor (2001)

found in her research of workplace knowledge, the tools of the CoP-- in particular, language and language structures, such as communication tools or forms-- mediate this knowledge and are part of the flexible, evolving system of distributed cognition in the CoP (Windsor, 6-7, p. 2001). Like Wenger and Lave, both Windsor and Rogoff reject the assumption that thinking and learning happens via a type of cognitive isolation of the individual.

In any given CoP, individuals are developing distinct and ever-shifting identities that are contextualized by the social structures at work both inside, immediately outside, and even quite distant from the CoP of the classroom itself. These evolving individual identities are shaped by the practices and negotiated meanings developed and adopted by the CoP and by the various other CoPs in which people participate. Identity here is meant to be understood in Wenger's (1998) terms; that is, identity manifests in (or as) an individual but is viewed from a social perspective where individual identification and negotiation occur in relation to membership in CoPs (p. 145).

Identity is also a negotiated experience (Wenger, 1998) and any individual's identity within a CoP is on a particular trajectory (all at different rates) toward a degree of "full" participation. "Full" participation in the CoP might be defined as becoming an "expert" in the practices of the CoP or simply movement toward being viewed as an "oldtimer." However, participation does not "end" with a participant somehow completing the formation of an identity and, therefore, becoming a "full" participant. Rather, the evolution of the CoP's practices continue, new meanings are negotiated through new events, new members, and new demands (both from within and outside the CoP). Thus, the CoP's practices are constantly negotiated, as are the identities of individuals within

the CoP. Lave and Wenger (1991) caution against a notion of full participation as movement toward some type of center or linear movement toward particular CoP goal(s). In fact, CoPs have neither designated peripheries nor centers. Instead, participants move centripetally toward increased "full" participation, which has no clear or measurable degrees of acquisition of knowledge. Full participation implies that there is a "diversity of relations involved in varying forms of community membership" (Lave and Wenger, p. 36-7).

In the CoP of the writing classroom, however, movement toward expertise is perhaps not as clear as it might be as if one were an intern in a graphic design firm. In the firm, the intern may be able to see that mastering Illustrator and Photoshop constitute one form of expertise. In the first year composition (FYC) classroom, however, models of writing expertise vary as widely as disciplinary genres and are difficult to define even from the perspective of the "expert" instructor. Meanwhile, as Wardle (2009) has argued, the FYC curriculum often calls for students to write in "mutt genres" that have no clear disciplinary grounding. Furthermore, as Freedman and Adam noted, "the institutional realities of schooling militate against a total appropriation of the apprenticeship model" (p. 421). Still, the CoP framework can help explain how writing knowledge develops in classrooms and the factors that impact how and whether a student may transfer writing knowledge across contexts. Recent scholarship has attempted to more deeply address writing transfer through understandings of contexts as viewed through the CoP model, including theories that explore "writing about writing" (Wardle and Downs, 2007), and applications of prior knowledge (Robertson, Taczak, & Yancey, 2012). These studies carve out the research space for the current study and ask important questions for

understanding writing transfer, including the extent to which writing is bound up by context and whether or not there are general principles of writing knowledge that might help writers more easily identify the purposes and expectations of any writing task so that they might move this knowledge across learning contexts to facilitate writing development.

*Studies of Writing Transfer*

*How* and *why* individuals use particular schema to facilitate learning in a novel context is one puzzle of writing transfer research. Thus, a major goal of transfer studies and specifically teaching for transfer is to explore both the contexts and schemas that a learner brings to a transfer opportunity. In "Are Cognitive Skills Context-Bound?" (1989), for example, Perkins and Salomon contend that transfer is a natural process for learners, since "when faced with novel situations, people routinely try to apply knowledge, skills, and specific strategies from other, more familiar domains" (p. 22). Both Judd's research on "general principles" and the cognitive view of transfer inform Perkins' and Salomon's (1989) later explorations on whether "thought demanding performance" can be facilitated through application of general cognitive abilities and strategies without such abilities and strategies being bound by context. Similarly, in Marini and Genereux's introduction to *Teaching for Transfer* (1995), the authors summarize the "vigorous debate" in transfer research that concerns whether "knowledge is tied to the particular sociocultural context in which it is acquired" or whether there are some "generally transferable items that can be fruitfully taught" and applied across contexts (p. 6). No matter how particular or general, individuals naturally-- consciously or unconsciously-- draw upon structural schema to facilitate learning in new situations,

even if that learning is sometimes unsuccessful.

Perkins and Salomon take up the discussion of the generality of cognitive skills, arguing that "the very existence of tool domains that enhance thinking and learning in content domains, in itself, constitutes evidence for general cognitive skills," while also acknowledging that these general skills are contextualized by local knowledge (p. 21). Furthermore, general skills or principles do not function *in place* of domain-specific knowledge, but rather must be shaped and adjusted as a way to access and apply it. Perkins and Salomon use the metaphor of a general principle as a hand that necessarily holds a baby differently than it holds a ball: "hands […] need pieces of knowledge to grip and wield and […] need to configure the kind of knowledge in question" (p. 23).

Reiff and Bawarshi (2011), similarly, argue that prior knowledge of genre and rhetorical awareness are used by students as a type as "discursive resources," but are best used flexibly. Their cross institutional study included surveys and discourse-based interviews of students across four courses at two different universities, with the goal to determine what types of "discursive resources, especially prior genre knowledge" students bring to new academic writing tasks in FYC and how they use them (p. 313). Reiff and Bawarshi select genre as a lens with which to view transfer of learning because "genres...categorize kinds of texts" (314). In terms of how genres help us categorize texts, Reiff and Bawarshi refer to Hanks' "orienting frameworks," Miller's comparison of genres to "affordances," and Bazerman's notion that genres "function as tools of cognition" (p. 314). The typifications and transformations of genre illuminate the idea that genre can "help students recognize and adapt more effectively and critically to new writing contexts" (p. 314).

However, while general genre awareness and knowledge of specific genre features might be used as a type of heuristic to mediate a student's approach to a new writing task and situation, using genre knowledge without flexibility and without equal consideration of contextual knowledge and other writing processes may lead to negative transfer (where students misapply genre knowledge in the new context). Genre and rhetorical theory regularly point to the situatedness of genre, and so, like transfer of learning, genre use must be viewed in the contexts in which it appears, where both immediate local and larger hegemonic social beliefs and practices shape its forms and functions (Miller, 1984). Both individuals and genres are necessarily re-contextualized and -constructed when the context changes. It is the degree of re-contextualization and reconstruction of genre that concerns Reiff and Bawarshi's study.

Reiff and Bawarshi argued that students who are “locked into” domains of genre knowledge tended to reapply their understanding of prior genre knowledge to the genres they were working with in the new learning context. Reiff and Bawarshi identified these students as “boundary guarders” who achieved what Salomon and Perkins have determined as “low road” transfer; that is, they used automatic or routinized approaches to the transfer task that were based on perceived similarities between the current task and their prior knowledge. They also repeated previous practices or processes in whole forms rather than shaped, abstracted or adjusted them to fit the writing context (p. 326). Interestingly, Reiff and Bawarshi found that boundary guarders were more likely to express confidence in writing tasks and that they used “whole genres” to inform their writing rather than (or more often than) using different genre-based strategies. Boundary guarders, while confident in the task at the outset, were not seen to progress over time,

since they did not abstract from prior knowledge or piece together different skills or strategies as they moved across contexts for writing.

Boundary crossers, on the other hand, were actually less confident in approaching writing tasks. A lesser or waning degree of confidence led students to be more "mindful of the need for reinventing and reimagining strategies" (p. 326). Boundary crossers also relied less on whole genres (e.g. literary essay) and more on a "constellation of strategies" (e.g. using transitions, defining terms, or narrowing focus) in their writing (p. 327). Additionally, boundary-crossers were more likely to engage in "not" talk, in which participants' identified what genres were *not* evoked when they were assigned an FYC writing task. This factor of "not" talk, according to Reiff and Bawarshi, is most suggestive of students being able to achieve what Perkins and Salomon have called "high road" transfer or the ability to "abstract and repurpose strategies from prior genres into less familiar genres" (p. 328). High road transfer requires additional cognitive and dispositional practices, particularly metacognition, or the ability to think about one's thinking. It also requires individuals to see connections between contexts and abstract approaches to learning in the new context from those connections (Perkins and Salomon, 1998).

Reiff and Bawarshi found that while students did use genre knowledge when encountering new academic writing tasks in FYC, the ways in which students shaped or adapt new knowledge after applying existing genre-knowledge is dependent upon other learning orientations, such as their levels of confidence in approaching the task (p. 324). The degree of a student's confidence is also discussed in Sommers and Saltz's (2004) research, which highlights the importance of the *novice stance* for entering freshman

writers. Sommers and Saltz looked at data from 422 students across four years of study. Their findings indicated that "students who refuse to be novices, who continue to rely on their high school methods and see writing as a mere assignment, often end up writing versions of the same paper again and again" (p. 140). Students who felt they had expertise in the genre assigned or a high degree of confidence in the task, like students with similar stances in Reiff and Bawarshi's study, did not progress as writers over their four years at Harvard. The novice stance, then, seems a useful orientation for students to have as first year (and beyond) writers in college.

Reiff and Bawarshi's and Sommers and Saltz's work on how students use prior genre knowledge to negotiate new writing tasks highlights the importance of genre as a tool that can provide exigence for transfer, whether "high" or "low" road. These studies underscore Marini and Genereux's (1995) argument that "although the effective evaluation of ideas depends on functions and criteria that tend to be highly domain specific, the generation of new ideas can be accomplished by applying relatively powerful heuristics that cut across domains" (p. 6). The degree and the application of prior writing knowledge is an important key to the puzzle of successful writing transfer. If writing and learning to write is always shaped and evaluated in the contexts in which it occurs, it is important to consider whether there are general principles of writing that help learners identify purposes and expectations of writing. Can such general principles of writing become part of a learner's prior knowledge schema and assist her writing development as she experiences new contexts for writing?

*Writing Development, Writing Transfer and Classroom Contexts*

Beach's (2003) concept of the "consequential transition" can be used to describe a

learner moving from secondary writing contexts to post-secondary writing contexts. This particular transition is the "site" of this research. Such a transition is "consequential" when "it is consciously reflected on, struggled with, and shifts the individual's sense of self or social position" (p. 42). It would also be categorized by Beach as "lateral" in that learners are "moving between two historically-related activities in a single direction" (43). In effect, while a student encounters new people, a new place, new requirements, and, perhaps, a new "self," she is also moving from one institutionalized requirement (12th grade English) to another (first year post-secondary writing and general education requirements). The impact of institutionalized requirements on contexts for writing lead to the concept that, in a large part, students continue to "do school" when they leave high school for college. Beaufort (2007) examines this problem, arguing that:

> ...the over-riding social context [of FYC] for students becomes the institutional requirement of the course itself. So writing papers is perceived by students as an activity to earn a grade rather than to communicate to an audience of readers in a given discourse community and papers are commodified into grades, grades into grade reports [...] This condition is a serious detriment to motivating writers and to teaching writers to be sensitive to authentic social contexts for writing. This condition also misleads students into thinking writing is a generic skill that, once learned, becomes a "one size fits all" intellectual garb. (10)

In reaction to these principle problems with FYC, in "Mutt Genres" (2009), Wardle suggests a "radical re-examination" of FYC such that its main goal is not to teach students to learn to write in the university, but to learn to write *about* writing in the university. The idea of "writing as a subject of study" (or WAW) pushes FYC pedagogy to include approaches that not only guide students in *how* to write but also ask them to explore *why* we write, what we *do* as writers, and who we *are* as writers.

Thus, the "consequential" transition for writers as they move from high school to

college-level writing tasks, for various reasons, is anything but seamless. Freshmen college writers are exploring new facets of identity at the same time as they negotiate a new institution. What makes these negotiations even more complicated, as Downs and Wardle (2007) point out, is that the public's conceptions of what writing is and how it should be taught is entirely different from the definitions of and approaches to writing used by compositionists who teach first-year writing and guide future instructors of it. The public understanding assumes that there are "universal rules for writing, stable and immutable" that should guide its teaching, but, as supported by social learning and rhetorical theories, the "rules" for writing vary by situation (Wardle and Downs, p. 56). "Rules" for writing are not stable across genre, discipline, institution, or context. However, Wardle and Downs have argued that this knowledge is beneficial for teachers and writers working in the first year composition classroom, since writing pedagogy can seek to expose the misconceptions of the public understanding, emphasize the rhetorical situatedness of all texts, and make "writing the subject of the writing course" (p. 60). Furthermore, while there is a misconception that "rules" for writing can be taught-- or that they exist at all-- there might be general principles for writing that can be taught and which writers can use flexibly in various situations that call for it.

In fact, while Beaufort (2007) argued that freshman writing courses have been largely disconnected from other disciplinary writing, she suggests, as Wardle (2009) does, that there might be a framework for FYC that teaches students "how to study and acquire the writing practices of different discourse communities" (p. 11). Beaufort's framework is designed to help learners (and instructors) consider the ways that writing contexts are distinct, different, and often distant from each other; in other words, she wants to explore

how learners might acquire particular "intellectual tools and frameworks" to strategically tackle new discourses in new contexts (p. 15). Beaufort argues, "it is possible to identify the common knowledge domains within which writers must develop context-specific knowledge" (p. 17). These overlapping, interactive, and socially constructed domains include writing process knowledge, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and genre knowledge; each of these are encompassed by an overarching knowledge of discourse communities.

Beaufort presents *discourse community knowledge* as the overarching type of knowing that students need to negotiate FYC writing and writing tasks beyond FYC. Her conceptualization of discourse community knowledge references communities of practice (CoPs), since she frames discourse communities as created by and communicated through a shared set of goals, values, and "certain material/physical conditions" (Beaufort, p. 19). Thus, gaining discourse community knowledge might also be framed as a process of "enculturation" for newcomers and/or novices as they enter a CoP. This begs the question of what enculturation looks like for FYC students in any given institutional context, since writing classroom learning communities often include students writing in "mutt genres" and seem to lack clear definitions of expertise. For Brent (2011), rather than "teaching for transfer" to other disciplines and contexts, a curricular goal of an FYC community might instead be reinforcing the "long term mental habits" of what it means to view writing as a discipline in itself. Meanwhile, Beaufort (2007) and Wardle (2009) have outlined that since FYC curriculum often involves reading and writing in and for multiple discourse communities, at the very least, these discourses must be named and their purposes and influences must be explored in FYC courses. And, as Roozen (2010) found in his study

of one student's writing development, enculturation in any one discourse is made more complex in consideration of the various communities and discourses in which individuals participate.

*Subject matter knowledge* is a more finely-tuned knowledge in the development of writing expertise. That is, as Beaufort presents, whatever the particular subject, it must be engaged and explored within the constraints of its discourse community. For example, collaboration might be a particular goal of the discourse community, but knowledge of the content itself is the object of the collaborative process, with critical thinking and/or other specific discourse practices engaged in order to develop subject-matter knowledge. One complexity of FYC is that it often subsumes other contents (either through open-ended topics that students choose to write about or by trying to adopt a particular community that is not authentic to the actual FYC space) as subjects for writing. This problematizes the learner's ability to see what expertise actually "looks like" in the content, as the FYC instructor is rarely an expert in content-area writing-- unless the content is writing itself.

In the interaction between subject-matter knowledge and discourse community knowledge, there is another natural overlap with *genre knowledge*. Beaufort both separates and integrates genre and discourse knowledge, arguing that genres "vary greatly from one discourse community to another and these variations become clear and understandable as one considers variations between discourse communities" (p. 20). Therefore, as Wardle (2009) has argued, it is not useful for an FYC instructor to simply teach the features of a particular genre if it is removed from its authentic discourse community. Wardle suggests that, at the least, writers should struggle with the "complex

reasons that genre evolved" as well as the "myriad reasons it may (and almost certainly will) change" (p. 768). Wardle suggests that since genres are nearly impossible to teach out of context, that FYC is better positioned to "explicitly abstract the textual characteristics of various genres, and reflect on how those genres are used to mediate work in different classrooms" (p. 782).

Beaufort shows the ways that genre knowledge and *rhetorical knowledge* are also natural complements to each other; thus, students' awareness of each and how they overlap can further aid the development of writing expertise. A consideration of the rhetorical situation aids students in seeing the ways in which their own texts both construct and are constructed by the larger discourse, which returns us to Beaufort's overarching concept of *discourse community knowledge*. In this way, through rhetorical knowledge, Beaufort's model emphasizes the importance of "considering the specific audience and purpose for a particular text and how best to communicate rhetorically in that instance" (p. 20). Furthermore, as Rounsaville (2012) argues, rhetorical analysis complements genre knowledge since it "goes beyond conventions such as format, word choice and various stylistic cues" (par. 9). Additionally, Brent's (2012) study confirms that "students who have a good sense of rhetorical knowledge are well-positioned to adapt well to new rhetorical environments" (p. 588). So far, then, Beaufort's framework shows how writers (and teachers of writing) can integrate knowledge and awareness of *discourse community, subject-matter, genre,* and *rhetoric* to constitute a holistic understanding of what writing is and does in specific contexts.

However, and finally, in order to help students grasp the complexities and interactions between these types of knowledge, students must also practice and be positioned to

practice meta-awareness of the situatedness of their texts and of their processes as writers. This includes, at the least, the ability to reflect on one's practice and progress as a writer within the discourse community. Students need to be, according to Beaufort, aware of what decisions must be made in order to get the text at hand written successfully. Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom (2003) outline various studies that validate the importance of metacognitive monitoring in any transfer opportunity. Similarly, other transfer researchers have underscored the importance of meta-knowledge and/or metacognition in the transfer process (Driscoll and Wells, 2012; Sommers and Saltz, 2004; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011). In "Understanding Transfer" (2007), Wardle concludes that "meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies in FYC may be the most important ability our courses can cultivate" (p. 82).

According to Beaufort, all of these domains best work in tandem, especially if they are to represent a full understanding of developing writing expertise. At the same time, Beaufort is aware that the framework and the domains within it are socially constructed and therefore are shaped by specific writing contexts and reconstructed over time. Nevertheless, she offers this theoretical framework as a way to view writing development holistically. In presenting a holistic theoretical model of writing development, Beaufort cautions that to "conceptualize writing knowledge in distinct yet overlapping categories does not inherently imply either that those categories are fixed and discreet, or that learning is a rote affair" (p. 21). Thus, models of writing transfer cannot work if prescriptive or if they imply that the process of writing development is a "fixed" thing. Rather, frameworks like Beaufort's are meant to address how writers and teachers of writing might more easily facilitate or at least understand writing development and the

transfer of writing knowledge across contexts. Wardle (2009) has asked what "general knowledge can we teach students about academic genres that will help them write in later courses? And how can we ensure that students will transfer that general knowledge-- at all and in helpful ways?" (p. 769). A feature of these theories of writing is that they illuminate the fact that writers need guidance if instructors expect them to abstract learning from previous situations and apply it to immediate and specific problems.

*The Research "Space" in Writing Transfer*

Sommers (2008) has contended that "writing development involves steps both forward and backward, gains and losses" (p. 154). In considering the non-linear, maze-like movement of any one writer's writing development, as discussed in this first section on transfer, researchers have explored a two-sided view of writing transfer: first, research points repeatedly to the context-specific nature of all writing transfer opportunities and second, it explores what, if any, are the generalizable concepts of writing knowledge that writers might use to more easily transfer across specific contexts for writing. Nowacek (2011) has pointed out that genre is "often the cue for transfer" and "though dynamic, is a way to avoid reinventing the wheel, a way of seeing general trends" (p. 20) and Brent (2011) argues that "in a new situation […] people use all their resources, including prior knowledge, general principles, and general ways of being in the world" (p. 409). Thus, using general principles of writing that help orient writers to the purposes and expectations of text is not only useful, but in some cases may be an automatic practice for learners as they attempt to succeed in new learning situations.

In this first half of the literature review, I have highlighted two important phenomena

from the research that help facilitate transfer. First, writing is learned and practiced in specific communities of practice. CoP beliefs and practices differ across contexts, disciplines and spaces for learning. Meanwhile, there are differences within them, too, including varied writing and learning activities and the affordances of learners within them. Second, writing knowledge, which includes the application of prior knowledge and knowledge of any general principles of writing, impacts the successful degree of transfer. Still, understanding general frameworks for purposes for writing or the impact of context on a writing task may not give writing researchers a complete picture of transfer in terms of how the entire transfer transaction happens for the learner. For example, Perkins and Salomon argued that using schemas to facilitate transfer work best when originally learned in *various* contexts and then partnered with other learning orientations, such as reflection and self-monitoring. Other research has emphasized the importance of the identities of learners as part of their abilities and motivations to transfer (Nowacek, 2011, Perkins and Salomon, 2012; Driscoll and Wells, 2012). Thus, as these studies have begun to more deeply argue, an even more deeply situated view of transfer would consider the learning attitudes and orientations that individual learners bring to a transfer opportunity, including their attitudes toward writing as they travel on particular trajectories toward expertise. I now turn to definitions and discussions of learning dispositions in order to illuminate the space in writing transfer research that calls for a more thorough definition of writing transfer that includes the ways that dispositions are part of each opportunity to transfer writing knowledge.

### *Competing Definitions of Dispositions*

Competing definitions of what is meant when the term *disposition* is used and/or

studied has required researchers to operationalize dispositions as well as pose theories that support the relationship between dispositions and transfer. Some questions to ask here, then, are: How has the literature on transfer and dispositions defined dispositions? How have researchers connected definitions of dispositions as they relate to transfer? Furthermore, how does one view of dispositions connect and compare to other views? In the following discussion, I outline how dispositions are defined in both social cognitive and transfer research.

In this half of the chapter, I consider definitions and categorizations of dispositions that consider them as conscious critical thinking or social cognitive orientations. I discuss research that explores how learning dispositions might be viewed in contexts for learning and transfer, such that learning transfer balances learner agency with social contexts and connects dispositions to individuals' "felt senses" of learning. In order to illuminate the connection between individual learning dispositions and the transfer context, I turn to a view of dispositions as grounded in the work of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* which highlights the perceived tacit and situated nature of dispositions as constructed by and between individuals and *fields.* Ultimately, this investigation of dispositions reveals how they are connected to learning, achievement and transfer. A balanced view of dispositions as embodied in cognitive orientations, individual agency and specific learning contexts can help illuminate the way transfer is enacted.

*Dispositions, Social Cognitive Orientations and Critical Thinking*

In *Gaining Ground in College Writing* (1991), Richard Haswell argues that transfer cannot occur without some relative engagement of the learner's motivation. He presents the idea that whatever skills or frameworks are available for approaching a transfer task,

the student "would still need the right motivations matching the right circumstances to reproduce the original rhetorical effects" (p. 99). In the literature on learning transfer, learning dispositions are usually given at least a nod of attention in most current theories, but they are not often integrated as an important part of the transfer equation. Here, I take up some of the social and cognitively-grounded definitions for dispositions in order to focus on the ways that they are often applied or operationalized as attitudinal qualities of learners that elicit thinking skills.

In quantitative research, recent psychometric studies of critical thinking have emphasized that not enough empirical work has been carried out to develop ways to measure how learners' dispositions elicit critical thinking and, furthermore, that valid and reliable measures must be established in order to show the clear relationships between dispositions and learning. Sosu (2012) and Giancarlo, Blohm, and Urdan (2004), for example, tested psychometric evaluations of dispositions via multigroup factor analysis in order to create scientifically valid and reliable measurements of dispositions. Both studies have been useful in my own research in terms of how dispositions might be measured quantitatively.

Sosu (2012) surveyed cohorts of undergraduate and graduate students to measure whether participants understood items aimed at measuring critical thinking dispositions in similar ways. Sosu identified that there are "key cognitive skills" involving critical thinking (e.g. inference, how to recognize assumptions, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation) which are directly linked to dispositions. He argues that "having a disposition to think critically implies having the ability to do so" (p. 2). Thus, a *display* of critical thinking ability exists in conjunction with a disposition, and dispositions are attitudinal.

Sosu narrows down dispositions that facilitate critical thinking into a "two factor dispositional taxonomy" of *critical openness* and *reflective skepticism.*

While Sosu does not link his study to learning transfer, he does argue that researchers can use his instrument in studies that aim to "evaluate the impact of dispositions on various domains of learning and professional performance" (p. 10). However, the two factor dispositional taxonomy means that there may be other dispositions or attitudes (such as those discussed later in this section) and these, while they may fall easily under one of these two categories, might be more directly measured. Still, a benefit of measuring dispositions in a general way, as Sosu's study does, helps test the potential that dispositions are transferable across domains. This links Sosu's tool to some of the theoretical work on transfer, such as the idea that there are "deep structures" such as meta-awareness of learning that may move easily across learning contexts.

Giancarlo, Blohm, and Urdan (2004) also sought to measure dispositions in order to address the question of whether the failure to display critical thinking is due to lack of ability itself or lack of a disposition that facilitates ability. Giancarlo et al. used four scales-- Learning Orientation, Creative Problem Solving, Cognitive Integrity, and Mental Focus—to measure the extent to which individuals perceived themselves as "willing and inclined" to approach challenging problems in learning across four diverse samples of high school students (p. 349). Despite a lack of discussion of how specific learning contexts might impact their findings, both Sosu's and Giancarlo et al.'s studies are useful for thinking about potential taxonomies of dispositions as well as how to measure them through question design.

These studies both feature an important separation between learning dispositions and

critical thinking abilities, but also seek to explore the way that the two are linked. Meanwhile, social cognitive researchers have conducted various large-scale quantitative studies to measure what has been called the "agentic motivational orientation(s)" of self-efficacy, self-regulation, task value, and/or locus of control in relation to student achievement (Bandura, 1986, 1992; Nicholls, 1989; Grant and Dweck, 2003; Parjares et al. 2007; Hsieh and Schallert, 2008; Liem et al, 2008; Kolic-Vehovec et al, 2008; Seo and Ilies, 2009; McClure et al, 2011; Komarraju and Nadler, 2013). These social cognitive studies have tended to explore connections between one or more of these orientations and student behaviors or achievement outcomes. For example, Kolic-Vehovic (2008) et al studied goal orientation patterns and motivational "profiles" in university students as connected to and influencing reading strategies. A motivational profile is constituted by a student's likelihood to engage in a task as informed by expectancy and task value; thus, motivation is linked to beliefs about the values of a task (expectancy value) as well as beliefs about self-abilities (task value) (p. 108). Komarraju and Nadler (2013) argue that self-efficacy "fuels persistence in the face of difficulties, increases intentionality and long-term planning, and promotes self-regulation and self-correcting actions" (p. 67). Komarraju and Nadler connect self-efficacy to self-regulation in their study in order to examine whether students who are likely to be confident in themselves as learners and who persist in the face of challenging tasks are also likely to plan and monitor their learning and see intelligence itself as malleable and determined by effort (p. 68). These types of studies indicate that there learning dispositions work in relationship to ability—and that different combinations of disposition and ability lead to different achievement outcomes.

Perkins, et al (2000) have critiqued the ways that transfer research has tended to focus on outcomes exclusively. The problems with such studies, as Perkins et al. suggest, is that differences in performance on a transfer task are then attributed to differences in ability, rather than differences in self-perceptions of ability and/or perceptions about the difficulty of the situated task at hand. Some social cognitive research has emerged which seeks to explore self-perceptions and, thus, dispositions toward learning, subjects, and tasks, yet little research exists that links dispositions to transfer. An examination of the interaction between dispositions and transfer also implies the important question of how and whether dispositions are learned in the first place and the degree to which dispositions are enacted in contexts for learning, which I take up in the next section.

*Dispositions and Contexts for Learning and Writing*

Tishman, Jay, and Perkins (1993) suggest that dispositions are better learned through enculturation rather than transmission. That is, that while teaching as transmission-- that is more rote forms of learning, often termed as "direct instruction"-- is useful in some domains or in regards to particular curricular targets, it highlights communication and teaching for understanding (p. 149). With respect to learning dispositions, students are better positioned to develop inclinations and sensitivity toward—in Tishman, Jay, and Perkins' terms—"good thinking" when they are "enculturated" in "through cultural exemplars, cultural interactions, and direct instruction in cultural knowledge and activities" (p. 150). One of the goals of enculturation is to make tacit behaviors explicit, which can be achieved through teacher transparency about her thinking as well as through modeling of dispositional behaviors and cultivating a dispositionally productive

classroom environment. For example, a teacher may present a series of questions for which there is no clear or "right" answer, model her own thinking processes in exploring these questions, and facilitate an environment where students will also engage in exploring these types of questions. Wardle (2012) has identified this type of environment as promoting a "problem exploring" doxa, while Perkins and Salomon (2012) have identified it as a *culture of opportunity,* in which learners and teachers are engaged "in farther ranging and more open-ended experiences where [they] need to grope for potentially relevant prior knowledge and use judgment to decide on its relevance and how to proceed" (p. 257). These types of environments are constructed to help learners to move away from specific "targets" and demonstrations of knowledge, and learn through open-ended scenarios or tackle questions without clear "right" answers. Project-based work, exploration and collaboration might be focuses of these curriculums.

In connecting these ideas of "good thinking" to writing development, Driscoll and Wells (2012) have argued that current research on transfer should include an exploration of learners' applications of dispositional qualities in response to their writing tasks, processes, instruction, and environment. Driscoll and Wells define dispositions as "internal qualities" that can be thought of as particular "habits of mind." They describe four specific dispositions that aid learning transfer, drawing on research from the fields of education and psychology to ground these dispositions. These categorizations provide a framework for determining how students use dispositions to either facilitate or disrupt knowledge transfer. Driscoll and Wells' categories include:

1. *Self-efficacy*, where students' beliefs about their capabilities directly inform their abilities to face challenging or unfamiliar tasks, including the

ability to persist in difficulty and enact "mindful abstraction."

2. *Expectancy-value*, which links students' motivation to undertake a learning task to the value that they ascribe to the task or the educational environment itself.
3. *Self-regulation*, which, according to Driscoll and Wells, is a process that includes self-reflection, self-assessment, and goal-setting. This category of dispositions is perhaps most supported by context and the teaching experiences that students have had.
4. *Self-Attribution*, or a focus on locus of control, where individuals are able to connect their efforts to their own successes or failures. Low achievers, for example, tend to connect attributes like difficulty of task or degree of teacher assistance to outcome rather than the direct connection between degree of effort and outcome. (pars. 27--43)

Driscoll and Wells argue that explorations of dispositions (such as these categorizations of them) can reveal practices that allow or prevent transfer from taking place, since dispositional orientations are "a critical foundation upon which learning is built" and emphasize that dispositions are carried into (and out of) learning situations by the individual (par. 46). However, they also acknowledge the importance of context in calling out the types of dispositions that facilitate transfer.

In their argument for research on transfer that explores dispositional internal qualities, they move away from a "thinking skills" orientation for defining dispositions, grounding their view, via Slomp (2012), in Bronfenbrenner's (1999) bioecological model of development. This approach views learning as characteristic of the interplay of person,

environment, and outcome. It considers the complex interactions of intrapersonal factors, including dispositions, with immediate environment on a developmental task. Slomp argues that this model also balances individual and context in assessment-- and transfer--tasks. According to Driscoll and Wells, drawing on Slomp, dispositions thus a critical part of a larger system that includes person, context, process, and time (par. 19). Driscoll and Wells have used this model to argue that writing transfer theorists have not always considered the learner's agency, or, in particular, what dispositional qualities the learner brings with him to the environment in which the transfer opportunity appears.

The idea that particular dispositions are elicited in context is also supported in social cognitive theoretical research, as discussed in the previous section via Brofenbrenner. In this study, I draw upon Driscoll and Wells' four categorizations for and definitions of dispositions, but, here, I ground each dispositional term in the larger body of social-cognitive and education research literature that connects attitudes toward learning and learning itself. I use these expanded definitions to explore my own analytical model for exploring the data. I also change the dispositional term *self-attribution* to simply *attribution,* since the data in this study bears out attributions that are not within the "self" for participants.

*Self-efficacy:* A summarized version of Driscoll and Wells' definition for self-efficacy theory posits that students' beliefs about their capabilities directly inform their abilities to face challenging or unfamiliar tasks, including the ability to persist in difficulty and enact "mindful abstraction." Bandura's (1986, 1993) research is cited in their and various social cognitive studies of self-efficacy as a foundation for understanding this phenomenon. In the most general sense, self-efficacy is a belief-

construct of confidence; that is, students have a degree of confidence in any given academic task in terms of how accomplishable they believe it is for them to achieve (Liem et al, 2008). Self-efficacy, then, becomes a measure by which researchers might understand students' learning or achievement behaviors and outcomes, but it is also connected to students' degree of motivation and persistence in undertaking and completing a task.

Hamilton, Nolen, and Abbott (2013), for example, showed how self-efficacy is connected to motivation in their quantitative longitudinal study that sought to measure the motivation to learn to read and write in students from first to eighth grades. Their hypothesis asked whether maintained or increased motivation over time would lead to higher engagement in reading and writing activities. Since both the purposes for and perceptions of these types of activities also change over time, what's important to students at different levels of learning also changes. While their results showed that cross-year comparisons proved difficult, the researchers made an important distinction between self-efficacy and motivation, arguing that previous studies on motivation had conflated them. Instead, they referenced various studies and their own findings to argue that self-efficacy is an "antecedent to motivation to engage in an activity, but self-efficacy is not motivation" (p. 153). Furthermore, self-efficacy is elicited (or not) differently in different contexts for learning: "one could have high self-efficacy for reading an easy text but low self-efficacy for a more difficult one" (p. 153). This idea gives shape to Driscoll and Well's framework for learning dispositions as part of transfer, since it suggests that dispositions are *elicited through* particular contexts and do not stand for motivation but rather *elicit* motivation.

In Komarraju and Nadler's (2013) study of self-efficacy, the researchers use Bandura's (1986) hypothesis that self-efficacy can be improved or developed overtime. They found that students who have high self-efficacy also persist in their learning, even when challenging, and also use self-regulatory strategies to monitor their learning (p. 68). Their findings support Bandura's argument that self-efficacy can be improved and developed. Komarraju and Nadler also show the ways that an orientation of high self-efficacy works positively in concert with other dispositions, such as self-regulation and/or goal-setting behaviors. Explorations of the connections between dispositions are common in the more recent wave of social cognitive research on learning dispositions, such as Liem et al's (2008) exploration of how self-efficacy, expectancy (or task) value (which I take up in the next section), and achievement goals relate to their functioning in learning and/or academic tasks.

*Expectancy-Value:* Like self-efficacy, expectancy-value—often referred to as task value—is an orientation toward learning that is directly linked to a student's motivation to undertake a specific task, but is defined by the value that he ascribes to the context for learning, the task itself, or both. In Liem, et al's (2008) and Joo, et al's (2013) research regarding task value, this disposition orients behaviors toward learning based on the expectancies a student has regarding the value of the goal toward which she is working. Thus, expectancy value is an *antecedent* dispositional behavior to actually engaging in a task and working toward some degree of successful completion of it. In other words, expectancy-value is another belief construct, one where a learner's beliefs concerning the degree to which a task is worthy of pursuit informs decision-taking in response to it. According to Joo et al, the "task must be valuable to oneself, and it tends to predict the

decision on whether to pursue learning further or not" (p. 150). Liem et al's study, on whether task value has a direct influence on achievement goals, posits that expectancy-value is related to the pursuit of various goals, depending on the learner, from specific to broad (p. 488). For example, a student's "goals" may be somewhat abstract and related to the purposes of studying and education in general, such as a career goal that is not going to be directly realized upon the completion of the task. Other goals might be more specific, such as to get an A grade. Goals may shift and change according to learning context, thus, like each of the dispositions presented here, the disposition of expectancy-value and the degree to which it informs decision-taking is context-specific.

*Self-regulation:* Self-regulation works in relationship with expectancy value in that it also informs the degree to which a learner works toward a learning or achievement goal. Self-regulation is, out of the four dispositions presented here, the disposition that is most visibly manifested in specific behaviors. It is less of a belief-construct and more of an actionable or behavioral disposition. In effect, self-regulation is how a learner monitors, directs, or regulates actions toward goals, how they build expertise and generally improve, and how they self-evaluate (Komarraju and Nadler, 2013; Dibenedetto and Bembenutty, 2013; Seo and Ilies, 2009; Kolic-Vehovic et al, 2008). Kolic-Vehovic et al (2008) presents self-regulation as a "goal orientation" that is reflected in an "integrated pattern of beliefs" that leads learners to engage (or not) in behaviors such as delay of gratification, help-seeking, setting goals, creating or enacting study strategies, and/or completing tasks outside of the classroom (p. 109). These self-regulatory behaviors are directly correlated with self-efficacy and expectancy value, and students primarily engage a context-dependent goal-orientation that is either: 1) a mastery goal orientation, focused

on mastering a task, developing new skills, and/or improving competence and comprehension; or 2) a performance goal orientation focused on the ability to compare well against and excel past other students, on obtaining better grades than other students, or on gaining social approval of their achievements (p. 109). A consideration of belief constructs such as self-efficacy and expectancy-value have helped behavioral researchers understand motivational self-regulation processes, and have been said to be "simultaneously operating" with self-regulation. As Komarraju and Nadler argue, self-efficacy is "likely enhanced when self-regulated learners actively manage their internal and external environment" (p. 68). Conversely, a learner who procrastinates may do so not because they lack knowledge of self-regulatory strategies, but because they have low self-efficacy and lack the confidence to apply them. This example shows how each disposition is highly integrated with and simultaneously elicited with the others. Furthermore, this category of dispositions, as Driscoll and Wells argue, is perhaps most context-dependent, since the classroom environment can promote or inhibit particular behaviors related to task completion.

*Attribution:* The disposition of attribution, like self-efficacy and expectancy-value, is rooted in beliefs or self-perceptions of learners. In terms of learning performance, students use dispositions to orient themselves to learning through attributions. These attributions are rationalizations regarding the locus of control concerning the degree of success or failure in completing a learning task or gaining new knowledge. Learners may attribute success or failure to a controllable locus of control, such as *effort* (e.g. "I really worked hard on that paper!"), or to an uncontrollable external locus of control, such as the task (e.g. "The assignment was too confusing."). Erten and Burden (2014), Joo et al.

(2013) McClure et al. (2011), and Hsieh and Schallert (2008) present *attribution* as the way in which learners explain or rationalize success or failure in a particular performance. More specifically, an internal locus of control involves the learner attributing a particular outcome to internal beliefs about her ability or to individual behaviors such as persistence. An external locus of control concerns a belief attribution that a content was "too hard" or that an instructor or tutor helped the learner do well on a particular task. Attributions emerge from self-perceptions that are connected to internal attributions of effort or ability or from external attributions that ascribe the performance outcome to a force (often social) outside of the learner himself. Attribution, because it is based in self-perception, directly influences self-efficacy, values, emotions, beliefs about competence, and motivation. It works reciprocally with these dispositions (Hsieh, p. 514).

Erten and Burden (2014) present self-attribution as having three dimensions: locus, controllability, and stability. The locus might be internally or externally attributed, the attribution might or might not be in the learner's control, and the attribution might or might not have a stability that the learner can expect. For example, if a learner attributes his success in a particular performance to his effort, that effort is an internal attribution that is controllable, but it is also unstable across contexts and tasks. Alternatively, a learner might attribute his performance success to task difficulty, which is external to the learner, uncontrollable, but is also stable or doesn't change during the course of the performance task. One's self-efficacy can be influenced by the attributions—or beliefs—one has about how particular actions led to particular outcomes; reciprocally, one's attributions for an outcome can also be influenced by the level of confidence on has on a

given task (Hseih, p. 516). This quality of self-attribution is yet another example of how dispositions are elicited repetitively or concurrently in any particular learning task and indicates how dispositions shift and adjust in relation to context.

These definitions of attribution describe a larger picture of learning that includes dispositions as predictive of learners' intention and decision-making as part of the learning process. As Slomp (2012) suggests, theories of transfer that focus on outcomes-- which can also be characterized as assessments of knowledge transfer between situations-- do not properly account for individual intrapersonal factors, such as self-efficacy, as part of a transfer event (or opportunity). Without considering how such individual factors play a role in transfer, Slomp argues that outcome-based assessments (e.g. a "stand-alone" essay) cannot provide a complete understanding of what facilitates or impedes transfer and argues for a more thorough and developmental model of assessment. Slomp writes that a more complete picture of students' writing development is quite complex, and includes various "intrapersonal and contextual variables" since "each variable [has] a potentially significant impact on development" (p. 84). Additionally, as Bandura (1993) has contended, the cognition and learning behaviors of learners do not occur in isolation from their feelings and perceptions. According to Bandura, "personal dimensions affect one's behavior and one's behavior affects one's personal feelings and thoughts" (p. 218). If a more complete view of transfer includes, in part, the intentions and behaviors of learners as connected to their feelings and perceptions about the transfer opportunity at hand, it stands to reason that a view of transfer that focuses on a positive or negative outcome is a limited one.

As I've presented throughout this text, I use four terms to name and categorize

dispositions: self-efficacy, expectancy value, attributions, and self-monitoring. I have chosen to use these particular terms for dispositions for two reasons. First, these categories are broad enough to allow me to explore elements of dispositions in the data that can reveal how and whether transfer occurs, rather than focusing only on the types of dispositions that lead to successful transfer. Second, these categories for dispositions highlight learners' "internal qualities" that can be thought of as particular "habits of mind" rather than the types of thinking skills orientations, such as critical thinking skills, that have often been cited in the research as "dispositions."

Sosu and Giancarlo have shown the separation between dispositions as specific attitudes or learning orientations and critical thinking *abilities.* Perkins, Tishman, et al (2000) also critiqued the ways that theory and research on transfer has tended to focus on abilities exclusively. In looking at dispositions as attitudinal orientations to learning, we can separate cognitive behaviors, such as critical thinking, from emotional and attitudinal behaviors. Tishman, Jay, and Perkins' (1993) research proposed a technical definition of dispositions that is "necessary to instantiate dispositional behavior" and which distinctly separate ability, inclination, and sensitivity" (p. 271). The categories for dispositions used here, drawn from Driscoll and Wells, thus support a view of dispositions that is oriented in learners' inclinations and sensitivity, rather than on abilities, a narrower category that excludes the intrapersonal and attitudinal experience of and orientation to learning. In defining dispositions this way, this study explores how they work in relationship to transfer. How, though, might dispositions interact with knowledge transfer?

*The Transfer Framework of Detect-Elect-Connect*

The transfer framework of *detect-elect-connect* may presented by Perkins and Salomon (2012) may assist researchers as they search for ways to operationalize a more complex picture of transfer that moves beyond outcomes, as Slomp has argued is necessary, and which I work toward in this study in exploring the ways that learners' dispositions factor into writing transfer opportunities. Perkins and Salomon differentiate between a *culture of demand* and a *culture of opportunity* as influencing learners' abilities to experience high level abstractions of prior knowledge that facilitate learning transfer. While their work does not specifically address the ways that individual dispositions toward the learning task or the application of prior knowledge affect transfer, their discussion of how different learning *cultures* influence transfer and the framework that they use to evaluate these cultures are useful in terms of how dispositions are elicited and enacted in the individual learner.

A *culture of demand* is enacted through learning situations where knowledge is fixed, as something that can be "possessed" and where it is "kept in the mental warehouse ready for deployment" (p. 256). A *culture of demand* creates and enacts a *doxa* where students must be able to show knowledge "on demand." These practices are reflected in secondary schools through current curricular focus on high stakes testing, graded performance, and emphasis on "right" answers. Perkins and Salomon do not claim that this type of culture necessarily *prevents* transfer of knowledge, but, they argue, it "bounds" learning rather than creates opportunities for "expansive" knowledge transfer (p. 257). Thus, according to Perkins and Salomon, a *culture of demand* is less likely to enculturate in learners a developed and/or demonstrated mindfulness *about* how their learning occurs.

Furthermore, learners may not abstract their prior knowledge to a useful degree in a *detect-elect-connect* view of transfer since "overlearned routines," such as those which occur in a *culture of demand,* tend to support learners "mindlessly treating new problems as if they are familiar ones" (p. 255). Similarly, it does not explicitly foster in learners the types of dispositions that prompt them to look for the bridges where learning is connected. This concept of "bridging"-- that is, how learners are *instructed* to use prior knowledge to inform new learning-- is presented by Perkins and Salomon via a framework of *detect-elect-connect* (250), which serves here as a way to view data and explore the interactions between learning transfer and learning dispositions.

Perkins and Salomon expand on the concept of bridging, previously defined by the same authors in 1998 as the process of teaching for "far" or "high road" transfer, as situations where learners may be able to abstract learning from an initial task or new knowledge and make generalizations and connections that inform a new, different task or introduction of additional knowledge. In Perkins' and Salomon's 2012 article "Knowledge to Go," however, they suggest that educators and transfer researchers view bridging also from learners' experiential points of view, citing Loboto's (2012) argument that, in transfer research, there is a "tendency to evaluate transfer of learning from an expert's perspective" (p. 249). Instead, Perkins and Salomon recommend a more complex view of transfer "from an actor-centered perspective" and ask what sorts of transfers figure in learners' learning and how (p. 249).

To investigate how transfer is viewed from the actor-centered perspective, Perkins and Salomon provide the *detect-elect-connect* (D-E-C) framework, in which a learner must build three separate "mental bridges." First, she first needs to *detect* or "discern the

possibility of a connection" to prior knowledge (p. 253). While a "high surface similarity" provides the most fruitful opportunities for successful *detection* of knowledge connections, these types of connections may create more instances of "low road" transfer, rather than mindful abstractions of prior knowledge. After *detecting* a connection, a learner must next *elect* to pursue the connection. In this "step" of the D-E-C framework social contexts, mindfulness, behaviors and attitudes are as much a part of the transfer opportunity as the abstraction of prior knowledge. Perkins and Salomon point to various examples where all learning-- not just that which occurs in school-- includes the types of moral dilemmas in which individuals "find themselves tempted by impulsive but unwise actions" in which it is easy to let learning connections go, rather than doing the work of making them. They also note a perception by students in various studies that some subjects or types of learning are "meaningless." Perkins and Salomon suggest that there are teaching/learning frameworks that can contribute to successful *electing,* such as curriculum that fosters "seeing deeper structures" or presents knowledge as meaningful across a "broad range of circumstances" (p. 255). Finally, the act of *connecting* in the D-E-C framework is defined as how knowledge transfers between situations. For example, when the essay is produced, or a skill, practice, or adapted item of prior knowledge is applied and evaluated, how well do these successfully transfer to new learning contexts? However, echoing Slomp's critiques of transfer research that focuses narrowly on outcomes, Perkins and Salomon have argued that most transfer research has focused on the action of "connecting" prior knowledge to new learning tasks. Perkins and Salomon suggest a more complex and complete picture of transfer that includes individual intrapersonal factors, such as learning dispositions, which they argue are more likely to

be displayed in the *detect* and *elect* moves of their framework. They summarize their argument this way:

> [H]owever well we understand the conditions of transfer technically, wide-scale attention to transfer of learning in education calls for a shift in mind-set about what it means to know something and the kind of learning culture that fosters that kind of knowing (p. 257).

A wider understanding of transfer that considers other less-positivist and/or technical views turns this discussion to research that considers the emotional or "felt" aspects of learning.

*Dispositions, "Flow" and the "Felt Sense"*

Research that connects emotions and learning are aimed at getting to the "spirit" of transfer, as identified by Robert Haskell in *Transfer of Learning* (2001). "Spirit," according to Haskell, constitutes the "felt sense" or emotional drive that causes learners to engage in high road versions of transfer. Haskell's examination of felt sense also connects dispositions to transfer in ways that have been underexplored and under-theorized. Haskell argues that dispositions are elicited in transfer of knowledge situations in unconscious ways that are connected to the ways that knowledge is encoded:

> It is the personal meaning that information holds for us that affects the way we encode, retrieve, and relate information. Personal meaning somehow facilitates transfer by 'tagging' information as either relevant or non-relevant to current and new situations...The fact is, the more meaning that learning has for us, the more complex are our conceptualizations. In turn, the deeper our understanding, the greater our transfer possibilities. (p. 121, 123)

Haskell goes on to connect transfer of knowledge to "feeling good" as well as the classical rhetorical notion of the "good man." When the learning situation or the encoding of knowledge "feels" significant to us, we are more likely to abstract it and utilize it in

other situations. Haskell argues that this significance is felt more deeply than extrinsic motivations such as the satisfaction of achieving good grades. Instead, the deepest encoding of transfer elicits emotions that are connected to "felt interest," including satisfaction and continued curiosity with the subject matter (p. 126). Such intrinsic development of dispositions toward learning also have to do with moral character, much like classical rhetoric's argument that "to be a good speaker required that the rhetor be a 'good man'" (p. 127). Haskell argues that a modern view of moral character in learning includes a strong belief in what one thinks as well as what and how one learns.

Similar to Haskell's view of the "felt sense" is Csikzentmihalyi's view of "flow" (summarized in Schmidt, 2010). Flow as an aspect of learning is connected to intrinsically motivated activity, referring to "a state of optimal experience characterized by a total absorption in the task at hand; a merging of action and awareness in which the individual loses track of both time and self" (p. 605). Similar to Perkins' and Salomon's *culture of opportunity,* particular conditions must be present in order to elicit or facilitate flow. These conditions might be: activity chosen for its own sake, high levels of challenge balanced with one's perceived sense of skill, clear and important goals, immediate feedback, and highly focused attention (p. 606). Such conditions are both individual- and learning context-dependent. Drawing on Csikzentmihalyi, Schmidt argues that the descriptors of the conditions that create flow and students' experiences in relation to flow help researchers and teachers understand the contextual factors that promote deep engagement in learning. While both of these models for learning point to the learning context as facilitative (or not) for creating these conditions for learning, what is particularly useful from both the theories of "felt sense" and "flow" is that they

implicate the question of how learner dispositions contribute to such emotional experiences of learning.

However, not all emotion-referenced experiences of learning are as positive as those described by Haskell and Schmidt. McCune and Entwistle (2011), for example, make the case that as education moves toward more web-based concepts of the classroom as part of the educational experience, learning becomes more complex and stressful, leading learners to sometimes avoid learning. Such increased complexity (or "supercomplexity" as McCune and Entwistle describe it) necessitates a "will to learn" for students so that they might appropriately manage it. Thus, McCune and Entwistle point to and argue for a "disposition to understand for oneself" as connected to a "will to learn" (p. 303). Their review of research on learning that is considered "satisfying" to students shows that "learning processes are associated, not just with a characteristic form of motivation, but also a distinct feeling tone" (p. 304). In connecting dispositions to a "felt sense" of meaning directly related to how knowledge is encoded brings another facet of dispositions and transfer to this discussion and implies examinations of how contexts impact the ways that meaning is made, knowledge is encoded, and dispositions are learned. If we know, for example, that a "felt sense" means, in one sense, that we "feel good" about what we have learned, how do individual dispositions factor into the "felt sense" and how does the learning context elicit the types of dispositions that lead to this positive feeling about learning?

Researchers such as Driscoll and Wells, Slomp, and Perkins and Salomon have pointed to the importance of the learning context in the transfer equation, but a more thorough examination of how contexts construct individual dispositions is useful here,

since learning-- and therefore transfer-- cannot occur outside of a given context. If dispositions are part of the transfer experience, as I examine in this project, then dispositions also are created, elicited, shaped, and adjusted in context. I frame the remainder of the literature review discussion in social understandings of how dispositions are part of learning with a focus on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus.*

*Habitus and Social Theories of Dispositions*

In the previous sections, I focused on arguments for and research about learner agency in the transfer opportunity, with some arguments, like Driscoll and Wells', suggesting that there are general dispositions that are carried across contexts and tasks. However, Keranen, Encinas, and Bazerman (2012) present a different view, that dispositions or a "felt sense" of meaning in a transfer task is entirely caught up in the context and, in this case, the discipline, in which it is created. Keranen, et al. consider how particular intrapersonal factors, including beliefs and emotions, are used by English-learner science professionals-as-writers as they move their works toward publication in an L2 journal. Their study is useful in this discussion as it points to the interaction of beliefs, emotions and strategies that writers display as they continue to move toward expertise in the professional community. Keranen et al. find that the psychological orientations of participants correlate with both constructed models of success in their discipline and their own "immersive engagement" in it (p. 396). The professional scientists that were research participants in this study had to overcome obstacles of language in their writing development, immersed themselves in the field by adopting discipline-specific beliefs (e.g. what makes a successful scientific article), persisting through difficulty-- and feeling

pride when successful-- in relation to these beliefs, and by using self-awareness to facilitate writing strategies to help them create texts. The idea of "immersive engagement" connects to Jawitz's (2009) views of *harmonization* between individuals (particularly newcomers) and the collective or community, and refers to Bourdieu's theory of *habitus.*

Citing Bourdieu, Jawitz defines habitus as "'all at once a craft, a collection of techniques, references, [and] a set of beliefs' formed out of past experiences and socialization processes" (Jawitz, citing Bourdieu, 1992, p. 602). In this view, dispositions arise through individual interaction in social contexts and are harmonized or tuned through and by the interactions between individuals and communities. Jawitz connects Bourdieu's theory of habitus to Lave and Wenger's (1995) theories of communities of practice (CoP) in order to take both the "structural aspects of the social contexts *and* individual agency into account" as part of learning (emphasis mine). Newcomers or novices bring their dispositions-- or their habitus-- into the new-to-them COP, where a *class habitus* already exists. Class habitus, however, is constantly defined and/or redefined by the members of the COP, who (often unconsciously) bring both local and global influences on their values to this definition. Thus, the individual agency of a newcomer is also brought to bear on an existing class habitus as she moves on a trajectory of practice (also individualized) toward "oldtimer" status. Harmonization through the interactions between newcomer and CoP, is a process of:

> the newcomer being exposed to what the community of practice values through initial engagement with legitimate tasks, in a peripheral capacity, and with low levels of responsibility. As the experience of participation increases so the newcomer's identity settles into one or other trajectory, linking past experiences with future possibilities of membership in the community of practice. (Jawitz, p. 603)

In the CoP, individual dispositions are individually interpreted and enacted, but they are encoded tacitly through social processes of participation and harmonization within them. Newcomers become aware that there are "paradigmatic trajectories" in any CoP that have more value than others in participants' development toward expertise or as they move toward an identity of "oldtimer." As Jawitz argued, "these paradigmatic trajectories are most influential in shaping the learning of newcomers; it follows that particular dispositions are exhibited in and by these paradigmatic trajectories" (p. 603).

The concepts of harmonization and trajectories as part of *habitus* can explain why a learner may adopt and/or enact particular dispositions as she navigates various contexts for learning and writing. Wardle (2012), for example, argues that "high road" or "boundary-crossing" transfer results when particular dispositions are embodied by both the individual and the *field* in which the transfer opportunity arises. Wardle uses *habitus* to argue that an individual in a new learning or writing situation must be (or become) aware of the *doxa* or hegemonies of the *field* and either practice the beliefs of the field or work to change them. *Field* is both Wardle's and Bourdieu's term for a political, social, or economic system (e.g. an educational system). Whether learning to practice the beliefs of the field or working to change them, the learner always displays a *habitus* as "a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways" (Wardle, par. 14).

According to Bourdieu, individual agency is severely limited by class and community habitus, since, while individuals are "able to negotiate the rules, regulations, influences and imperatives that form all cultural practice, [they] delimit [individual] thought and action, precisely because fields dispose them to do so" (Schirato and Webb, 2003). In other words, practices become embodied through a form of "immersive engagement," as

Keranen et al. have outlined, and this embodiment becomes more tacit and less conscious as individuals move toward expertise. This view is quite different from notions of situated learning, which describe learning as occurring through negotiated meaning in the interaction between individual and community of practice. If we consider individual agency as limited, as Bourdieu has, it may not be possible to understand how individual preferences, choices, perspective, and reasoning are enacted in relation to learning and transfer. Since transfer of learning is often situated in some type of change in contexts, it stands to reason that individuals' habitus and enactment of dispositions may be less tacit and more conscious to them as they struggle with newcomer status and the potential to transform prior knowledge in the new context.

In school-based contexts, the habitus of the classroom community is a crucial factor in the quality of learning, but individuals are also learning to "play the game" of the classroom (and/or the institution) and, perhaps, are seeking to change it. This implies that "playing the game" means operating strategically in the field, such that the individual gains a "sense of the game, or sense of (a particular) reality, such that the habitus becomes attuned to the stakes of the relevant fields sufficiently to operate strategically" (Grenfell and James, 1998, p. 120). "Playing the game" references Keranen et al.'s study and turns this discussion to how "game playing" relates to the enactment (and/or initial learning) of dispositions.

According to Wardle (who replaces the term *transfer* with "creative repurposing"), learning transfer results when particular dispositions are embodied by *both* individuals and fields and are demonstrated in the learning context. She highlights how, on the one hand, dispositions are enacted in and by educational systems, such as local districts,

schools or classrooms, through, for example, philosophies and approaches to problem solving. On the other, students enter the field with habitus that "tune" to the system to different degrees. Thus, Wardle argues that *habitus* informs learning transfer in that both educational fields and people each embody either of two particular types of *habitus* that, in effect, define learning: "answer-getting" dispositions and the "problem-exploring" dispositions. Wardle argues that, in terms of writing transfer, a problem-exploring disposition is more facilitative of learning since writing is itself a problem-exploring activity. Unfortunately, in a high-stakes testing culture, a large degree of elementary and secondary school habitus exhibit an answer-getting disposition. Therefore, if students "tune" to this disposition, they bring an answer-getting orientation to their college level learning experiences.

In comparison-- and referencing social theories of learning and the CoP model-- Wardle argues that, in terms of writing studies, the dispositions of the field are not only informed by a learning orientation, but also by hegemonies of writing that the field embodies or enacts. Thus, an individual in a new writing situation-- like a freshman college student in his first semester at university-- "tunes" to the doxa and either practices these beliefs or works to change them. However, if the student enters a new (writing) situation that exhibits a problem-exploring orientation, but brings an answer-getting disposition, he may challenge the collective *habitus* in a way that is not facilitative of his own capabilities for high road transfer. Habitus, while tacit, has an "expressive dimension" in that "[i]t gives expression to certain meanings that things and people have for us, and it is precisely by giving such expression that it makes these meanings exist for us" (Taylor, 1999, p. 42). These concepts of tuning and harmonizing to larger

communities or contexts for learning reveal the shaping and constructing nature of context in how dispositions are displayed and may be enacted in learning or writing transfer, however, it is important to recognize, as Driscoll and Wells have noted, that dispositions are carried into and out of the learning contexts by individual learners. In the next section, I explore research that has considered what affordances and outside-of-school influences learners bring to the transfer task and how these affordances shape whether and how students enact learning dispositions as part of their knowledge development.

*Dispositions as/and Affordances*

What this discussion of habitus has not yet taken into account is how social factors outside of schools can also affect learning transfer. Noyes (2006) discusses the affordances that students bring with them to the learning situation and how these affordances as well as the different social positions that students take in different fields may affect learning transfer. Noyes argues that dispositions from one field "map" onto other fields (e.g. family-generated dispositions are mapped onto peer-generated and school-based dispositions). Noyes argues that the habitus "mediates structure and agency in...children's lives" (p. 46). In terms of dispositions as part of the transfer equation, Noyes argues that children enter school with fairly developed habitus and that school-based learning transfer acts as "prism, diffracting the social and academic trajectories of the children as they pass through it" (p. 59). A disposition embodied by a family or a peer group may or may not match well with the habitus of the learning institution. The degree of similarity in habitus is proportional to the degree of diffraction onto particular social

and academic trajectories, as Noyes describes.

Bok (2010) has also related students' affordances to their dispositions toward learning, which in turn informs their "capacity to aspire." Bok argues that capacity to aspire is developed through local communities, families, and other people who have experience navigating particular and relevant fields and pathways. If this is true, then there are additional research implications regarding discovering the degree of how habitus outside of school bears upon the habitus inside of it. As Bok points out, "Certain attitudes and dispositions formed during the process of engaging in social interaction and through being part of different cultural and social groups are granted more value at school. This enables those who embody these attitudes and dispositions to more easily inhabit and negotiate the field of education" (p. 4). But since collective habitus is not the same across educational fields, the definition for the "capacity to aspire" is, at least in part, constructed locally, which points back to Perkins' and Salomon's idea of a learning context that exhibits a *culture of opportunity* and Wardle's suggestion that learning transfer is best facilitated in cultures that value a "problem-seeking" doxa.

*Returning to the Research "Space": Dispositions and Writing Transfer*

In reviewing the literature, the connections between learning context, learning dispositions, learning, and transfer are clearly critical. While some scholarship highlights context in transfer and other research argues that learning dispositions can facilitate or impede transfer, I argue that these views are not exclusive of each other. A balanced view of dispositions as embodied in cognitive orientations, individual agency and specific learning contexts can help illuminate the way transfer is enacted. However, as Salomon

and Perkins note, few studies on transfer specifically reference application (or lack of application) of dispositional qualities as part of the scholarly definition of transfer. At the same time, these studies tend to "bring forward matters such as understanding, meaningfulness, and expectations that clearly would contribute to the motivational and dispositional side of the story but do not discuss it much as such" (251). Ultimately, Perkins and Salomon outline the ways that transfer research might begin to argue for particular pedagogical contexts and cultures that allow for students to become aware of their dispositions and connect them meaningfully to opportunities to transfer knowledge. In this dissertation, I explore this concept of "awareness" in terms of students' own attitudes toward learning through a study of their' learning dispositions as they encounter various writing tasks and move from high school to college level learning. I take a step away from a study of dispositions and transfer that focuses on pedagogies or instruction to explore, instead, what dispositions students bring to bear when writing in high school and first year college contexts, the extent to which their learning dispositions move across this transition (as well as across courses and tasks), and to what extent their dispositions facilitate or impede opportunities to transfer writing knowledge

# Chapter 3: Methodology

## *Introduction*

From the college writing instructor perspective, there is a perceived gap in writing knowledge students bring with them when they transition from high school to college writing contexts. I use the word "perceived," since much of the discussion on this transition is conducted in the hallways, offices, and faculty meeting rooms of colleges, by instructors from all disciplines, who complain that their students "just can't write." There are many factors that appear to help construct beliefs about this gap, including (but certainly not limited to): the degree to which (more global) learning standards in secondary contexts articulate to the (localized) learning standards in post-secondary writing contexts; the difference in theories of writing and learning that are championed and/or applied at each level; and a divergence of genre expectations for writing—and how to teach them—across the disciplines. Still, the extent to which writing knowledge does or does not transfer from high school to college has been underexplored in empirical educational research. Meanwhile, students entering college, despite whether or not their professors think so, would argue that they know at least *something* about academic writing and bring particular and individual dispositions toward learning to the college context that either facilitate or inhibit their academic writing development. I wanted to explore what students perceived that they knew or learned about academic writing in both the 12$^{th}$ grade year of high school and first year of college, how they viewed writing knowledge as transferring (if at all) across this transition, and gather information about their dispositions toward writing or learning in both secondary and post-secondary

contexts. In looking at these points of data, I aimed to explore the relationship between dispositions toward writing and writing transfer—as reported by participants from their own perspectives.

Therefore, my research questions were:

- What learning dispositions and habits of response to writing tasks do students exhibit or describe in both high school and college-level writing-focused contexts?
- How do dispositions toward writing and learning to write transfer across the high school to college transition?
- What generative dispositions facilitate either new knowledge or transfer of knowledge in academic writing situations?
- What disruptive dispositions inhibit new learning or transfer of prior knowledge for them?
- To what extent do students mobilize learning dispositions in local or specific writing situations order to detect connections to prior knowledge? To what extent do students elect to pursue these connections?
- What is the perceived impact of specific post-secondary learning contexts on these learners' dispositions?

*Research Rationale*

This project explores the perceptions about academic writing of seven participants as they move from high school writing contexts to first year college writing contexts. In my

original design and approach to this research, I had initially hoped to learn whether or not participants perceived that the writing knowledge they gained in high school—such as idea generation, text organization, thesis writing-- was useful to them in college and whether or not they felt they were prepared for college-level writing. I asked them questions that were meant to uncover their perspectives about learning and, in particular, academic writing. However, after the first round of interviews, while participants were in 12th grade, I quickly noticed that they discussed their dispositions toward writing and learning in relationship to their writing knowledge. In subsequent interviews, I returned to these conversations with participants and I invited them to speak more thoroughly about their dispositions (as I define them) toward learning and/or writing tasks. Early on in the data collection process, I sought to college information regarding participants' self-perceptions about their dispositions toward writing as well as toward developing or transferring writing knowledge to new college writing contexts. For example, I was curious as to whether a specific dispositional factor, such as self-efficacy (or confidence in one's abilities), facilitated the likelihood of positive writing transfer for participants.

It is useful here to reiterate the way in which this project defines the term *disposition.* Drawing on existing literature, I define *disposition* as an attitude or orientation toward learning—and, specifically for this project—toward writing. To organize and operationalize this definition of dispositions, I used the terms identified by Driscoll and Wells (2012) and their basic definitions for these terms as a foundation. However, I expanded these definitions and grounded them in the larger body of research on dispositions toward learning. As Driscoll and Wells' terms—self-efficacy, self-attribution, self-regulation, and expectancy value—are primarily used in educational

psychology research, I specifically drew from this field in order to explain and develop these expanded definitions for dispositions (as presented in Chapter 2) and to help me explore the role of individuals' dispositions toward writing inside the writing transfer context. This chapter describes the methodological approaches to this project, beginning with information about the Phase I research site.

*Research Site*

I recruited students from and conducted the first phase of this research at an urban public charter high school in Los Angeles. I chose to conduct my research at this high school because, in working there previously as a literacy coach for new teachers, I had built relationships with school administrators and was interested in both the purpose and the demographics of the school. (I did not have relationships with any of the students who participated in this study prior to the conducting of this research.)

The school's design and mission were to serve families from low socio-economic circumstances by providing students with a "college ready" curriculum. Over 90% of the school's student population was eligible for free-and-reduced lunch, which categorizes it, under Title I, as an institution that serves families with low socio-economic status. "College-ready" in this school context was defined by the school in various ways, but perhaps most essentially through a curricular program that required all students to complete the A-G sequence of courses required for admission to the University of California. Students were also encouraged to take college courses for dual high school and college credit during all four years of high school. The school prided itself on recent (at the time) statistics about the first graduating class (of which participants of this study

were members) that showed a large percentage of students as "college-going," which they based on college acceptance rates. More than 90% of the entire 2013 12th grade class from which participants were selected for this project were accepted to a two-year or four-year college program, and, provided they attended a postsecondary institution, would be representing the first generation in their families to pursue higher education.

In considering these demographic and curricular factors, I was initially curious about students' perceptions about their preparedness for college in terms of academic writing. As the interviews began to progress, however, I noticed that students were often reflecting on their attitudes toward writing in response to questions that were centered on writing knowledge (such as processes and practices). This "rich point" (Agar, 1994) led me to explore existing scholarship on learning attitudes and achievement, and helped me discover the research gap that informed the design of this project, where the relationship between dispositions toward writing and writing transfer is investigated.

*Participants*

The nine students who agreed to participate in the study were all seniors in high school upon their recruitment and were part of the school's first graduating class of 2013. (I describe the recruitment process in the following section.) These nine students each had specific family, language, and nationality backgrounds, as presented in Table 1 below. What unites group members is that each had a similar goal to pursue post-secondary academic study, at least upon recruitment for this research project. Additionally, with the exception of one participant, each would be the first in his or her family to attend college. There are various other factors that show the similarities across

the participant group, such as their bi- or multilingual abilities and their countries of birth. However, this research does not seek to uncover information about language influence, such as the impact of a participant speaking a home language other than English and/or English language development (for speakers of English as a second language) on the findings. Nevertheless, it is important to note that five of the original nine participants reported that they exclusively spoke Spanish at home, while two of the nine participants spoke both English and Spanish at home. Only two of the original nine exclusively spoke English in their home environments. In terms of nationality, four of the original nine participants were born outside of the United States. The five other participants were either first- or second-generation American-born. As I have pointed out, each participant of the original nine had the intention of pursuing post-secondary academic education. In discussion of participants throughout this project, all real names have been changed to pseudonyms in order to protect participants' privacy.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

| | Gender | Home Language | Nationality (country of birth) | Post-secondary academic plans | Interests (academic study) | Other factors |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student 1 | M | Spanish | El Salvador | 4 year university out of state | Engineering | |
| Student 2 | F | Spanish | Mexico | 4 year university in state | Unsure | |
| Student 3 | M | English | U.S. | 4 year university in state | Business | Single mother |
| Student 4 | M | Spanish and English | U.S. | 4 year university in state | Unsure | |
| Student 5 | M | English | U.S. | 2 year college local | Unsure | Parents have college degrees |
| Student 6 | M | English and Spanish | U.S. | 2 year college local | Unsure | Lives between mother and father's homes |
| Student 7 | F | Spanish | Mexico | 2 year college local | Nursing | Single mother; Dropped from study after Phase I |
| Student 8 | M | Spanish | Mexico | 2 year college local | Unsure | Dropped from study after Phase I |
| Student 9 | F | Spanish | U.S. | 2 year college local | Unsure | |

*A Note on Attrition*

Between Phase I and Phase II, or after participants had graduated high school but before they had begun college, two students dropped from the study. One student communicated that he was no longer interested in participating in the project and the other student did not originally reply to phone, text or email contact when I attempted to get in touch with her for the first interview rounds of Phase II. I subsequently attempted to get in touch with this second student again, and did eventually hear from her later into

the fall during Phase II. She indicated that though she was interested in participating, her circumstances made it too difficult for her to continue. I do not know whether either of these students moved forward with their plans for post-secondary plans study. In having one male and one female each drop from the study, my female to male ratio did not change. The final number of participants in the project totaled seven individuals.

Upon completion of data collection, after both Phase I and Phase II had ended, I had a full set of interview data from each of seven participants, with two females and five males making up the final group. In the recruitment phase of the project, I had hoped to end up with at least 10% participation of the total senior class (or five students of 49). As the final participant set totaled seven individuals, I exceeded this goal. I suggest that the participant set provides a good representation of the 12$^{th}$ grade graduating class at the research site during Phase I—and, in particular, properly represents the demographics of the school in terms of language, race, and nationality. For example, the school population was 92% Latino/a and all participants in this project are ethnically Hispanic. The school demographics also identified that 97% of parents had "little or no college" Six of the seven participants would be in the first generations of their families to attend college.

In Phase II of the project, after graduation from high school, seven participants continued to participate in the study as they pursued post-secondary academic schooling. Three of these participants attended the same local community college in the first year of post-secondary schooling, two attended the same local university in California, one attended a university out of state, and one attended a university in the state, but out of the local area. In discussion of participants throughout this project, all real names have been

changed to pseudonyms in order to protect participants' privacy.

*Phase 0*

I have described the data collection phases in this project as Phases I and II, however, there were, of course, planning and recruitment phases of this work, which I will refer to as "Phase 0." Phase 0 began with recruitment. I applied for and obtained IRB approval for the project in the fall of 2012 and began to recruit potential participants in the early part of 2013. At the research site, I introduced the project to the full senior class during short five-minute presentations in their English courses. I presented to two classes of seniors, totaling approximately 49 students. I use an approximate number of students present at the recruitment presentations because I did not count the total number of students present and a few students may have been absent. Nevertheless, the total senior class was 49 students in number and all students became aware, either through my presentation, follow-up from the English teacher, or word-of-mouth about the project and the potential for all to participate.

During these short presentations, I described the project and its purpose as well as the time commitment for participants, which asked them to participate through their first year of college after high school graduation, a time span totaling about eighteen months. I informed students that there were no restrictions for or risks in participating and that all students in the 12$^{th}$ grade were eligible. I answered clarifying questions from each group and distributed permission forms for students and their parents, explaining that students who wanted to participate but who were not yet 18 years old would need to obtain parent permission in order to participate. I also obtained signed permission forms from each

teacher of the senior class at the research site, since I collected writing prompts and student writing samples from them as part of the initial phase of data collection. I did not, however, interview teachers at the research site for this project.

I had hoped to initially gather interest and permission from at least 10 students (or 20%) of the senior class for this project, since I anticipated that there would likely be some attrition from at least a few participants over the time-span of the research. I returned to collect permission forms one week after the initial presentations and obtained three completed permissions. With some follow-up reminders from myself and the school's senior English teacher over the next two weeks (again to the entire senior class), six more students volunteered for the study. The total number of permissions obtained during Phase 0 was nine, with three females and six males comprising this participant group. While the total number of students in the senior class had a slightly larger percentage of males (27/49 or 55%), females made up 30% of the original participant group of nine.

The nine individuals who volunteered to participate may have been more predisposed to participate or volunteer for this research than other students. However, two factors may have assisted in balancing out the "types" of students who chose to participate: first, after gaining only three volunteers for the project in the first week after the initial presentations to seniors, the senior English teacher and I gave small and repeated reminders to all 12$^{th}$ graders, which may have prompted students who were initially reluctant to consider participating. Second, I widened the window of time to turn in permissions, which, in combination with gentle reminders about the project, allowed students who were hesitating for any reason (including simply forgetting to sign the

permission form) to join the study.

*Data Collection: Phase I*

After obtaining permission from participants, I began the first round of data collection, by interviewing participants during the spring semester of their 12th grade year of secondary school, which I call Phase I. During Phase I, I conducted three in-person interviews with each student which averaged 30 minutes in length. Phase I interviews took place in April, May, and June of 2013. I conducted each of the three interviews with participants during the school day and during their advisory period, which was a non-academic class in which students worked on homework, held meetings with their teachers or other school personnel, or designed, led, or attended school activities (such as pep rallies). I received permission from school administrators and participants' advisory teachers regarding conducting interviews during this part of the school day. I always scheduled interviews in advance with participants and, on the day of the interview, I gave them the option to reschedule for another day if they preferred or needed to work on assignments or attend activities during the advisory period in which I had requested to meet.

*Documents collected:* Before I began interviews in Phase I, I collected participants' academic writing and assignments, including their assignments and papers filed in their Writing Portfolios, which students were developing in their English classes over the course of their senior year. I used these texts as artifacts to guide interview questions in the first interview of Phase I. I also asked them for copies of writing prompts and their essays that were assigned during April, May, and June (when I conducted interviews).

The writing assignments that participants worked on during the final three months of the year—as well as a review of writing portfolio documents—became points of conversation in each of the three interviews during Phase I. I used a stimulated recall research approach in asking participants about these prompts and their written essay responses to them as a way to collect information regarding their feelings about particular assignments and/or their decision making processes in terms of responding to them.

In total I collected an average of 10 writing prompts, across disciplines, from each participant and their written responses to these prompts. The number of pages of written responses in response to these prompts varied, but I collected an average of 20 pages of written work from each participant. The majority of these writing prompts and participants' written responses were timed writing in-class exercises. Four of the nine participants were AP Literature students during the 12th grade year and were practicing for the AP examination. The AP teacher for these students also taught the non-AP (or standard) 12th grade English class and often asked these students to write timed essays. I also collected prompts and written responses for four major papers, including 2 literary essays, one narrative, and one paper for Government/Economics. Types of documents collected are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Phase I Documents Collected

| **Type of document** | **# of pages (average)** | **Class Assigned** | **How many times assigned (total)** | **Prompt collected/ available Y/N** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In-class timed essay | 1.5 | English/ AP English | English (6)<br>AP English (7) | Y |
| Literary Essay | 3 | English/AP English | English (3)<br>AP English (3) | Y |
| Narrative | 2 | English/AP English | English (1)<br>AP English (1) | N |
| Expositiory Paper (Utopia/ Dystopia) | 2 | Government/Economics | 1 | N |

*Interview 1/Phase I:* The initial interview of three included brief questions about participants' family backgrounds (parent information, number of siblings, education histories). I asked these questions to get a sense of the participant's personal contexts—including home life, external influences from parents or siblings, and prior schooling experiences. I also asked questions that prompted a review of what classes they were each taking as well as former, current, anticipated, or on-going writing assignments. I then asked participants two "grand tour" questions (Agar 1982). The first was: "When you get a writing assignment, what goes through your mind?" and the second was "How would you describe yourself as a writer?" (See Table 3 for the list of Interview 1/Phase 1 "grand tour" questions.) While these questions were asked to each participant in the first interview and while our individual conversations primarily developed from these two foundational questions, participants occasionally initiated topics of discussion that grew from questions other than "grand tour" questions. For example, one participant mentioned recent troubles at home due to her parents' separation and her duties there as the oldest sibling of four. Another participant, after recounting his parents' educational histories, talked about his parents' repeated message to him about the importance of attending college. I always allowed participants to share these types of information or reflections. This approach is supported by Charmaz and Belgrave's (2012) view of grounded theory interview methods, which, as they argue, "need to be sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences and narrow enough to elicit and explore the participant's specific experience" (p. 351). It also echoes Freedman and Adam's (1996) "naturalist" methods, where the goal of collecting interview data is to "elicit and value the participants' own constructions of the meaning of their discursive practices and on

that basis to point to patterns in the richly textured, socially constructed realities" of the contexts in which participants participate (p. 402). My initial interview approach, therefore, was primarily emic in nature as I had not formed a hypothesis or focus, but instead wanted to, via open discussions, "get at" students' perceptions of their writing knowledge (See Appendix X for Interview I/ Phase I sample questions).

I also used these methods to inform my approach to second and third interviews during Phase I. However, the two subsequent interviews in Phase I (after the initial interview) were also recursive in nature; that is, as the interviews progressed, I recorded and returned to "rich points" as well as patterns of response from one or both previous interviews. I defined "rich points" as an anchor for analysis in that a participant's commentary became a "reference or understanding of what is happening (Green, 2012). Green et al (2012), via Agar suggests that rich points make meanings and practices visible to researchers (p. 310). For example, if a participant discussed a particularly challenging writing assignment she was working on in one of her classes, I would return to this point in the following interview in order to record any new insights or changes in perception. Thus, ongoing interview "conversations" enabled me to get participants' commentaries on and interpretations of the details of previous conversations. The second interviews in Phase I, for example, usually started with questions or conversation starters such as: "Okay, you're writing a paper for Government and Economics class. Tell me about this assignment. How is it going?" There were various threads of conversation that continued over the course of the three interviews that occurred in Phase I.

Table 3: Interview 1/ Phase 1 "Grand Tour" Questions

| Interview I/ Phase I |
|---|
| 1. Do you have any questions about this project? |
| 2. What are your plans for school next year? |
| 3. How many siblings do you have? Older or younger? |
| 4. What language do you speak at home? Where were you born? |
| 5. Tell me about your parents' educational background. |
| 6. Tell me about the classes you're taking now. Have you taken or are you taking any college classes for dual credit? |
| 7. Where did you go to elementary school? Middle school? Anything you'd like to say about these school experiences? |
| 8. Let's look at some of the writing you've done this year. What do you remember about these assignments? What did you learn from them? |
| 9. What writing assignments are you working on now or do you anticipate soon? |
| 10. When you get a writing assignment, what goes through your mind? |
| 11. How would you describe yourself as a writer? |

After the first interview of Phase I, in considering both rich points and patterns of response, I began to notice that a majority of interview conversations included at least some discussion of participants' descriptions of their *feelings* about an aspect of the writing context—the instructor, the classroom community, or the assignment, for example—or their feelings about their own expertise as writers within these contexts. Between the first and second interviews of Phase I,I began to investigate existing research that drew connections between attitudes toward writing, writing contexts and transfer. It was at this point that a primarily emic approach to interviewing changed to a more etic approach that included exploring participants' dispositions.

In the second and third interviews of Phase I, in June of 2013, in addition to asking students about current writing assignments and in returning to specific rich points or patterns from earlier interviews, I also asked pre-designed questions that aimed to explore participants' dispositions toward learning and writing. I created these questions by returning to education and educational psychology research literature that had considered

the affective aspects of learning and/or writing, which led me to various studies on students' dispositions and orientations toward learning and how these, primarily, supported or hindered critical thinking. I was especially influenced by Sosu's (2012) and Giancarlo's (2004) quantitative studies, which specifically focused on the ways that students' dispositions facilitated or inhibited critical thinking. It was also at this time that I looked at more theoretical or pedagogical research from transfer and writing transfer literature that indicated the ways that dispositions might be a component of a positive or negative writing transfer experience (Driscoll and Wells, 2012; Perkins and Salomon, 2012). Thus, between Interviews 1 and 2, I began to form the research questions that have guided this project and redesigned interview conversations to elicit information that might help answer these questions. Nevertheless, I continued to allow interviews to be open and develop in the direction that the interviewee moved our conversations. (See Appendix A for examples of the interview questions I was prepared to ask in Interviews 2 and 3 for Phase I.

*Survey Design*

At the end of Phase I and prior to the students' high school graduation, I also gave them an online survey of 30 prompts to collect data related to students' confidence in their critical thinking abilities, their habits of mind in relation to school, and work habits. Participants rated themselves on a five-factor Likert scale: strongly agree; agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree; or strongly disagree. I created survey prompts by modifying previous quantitative dispositional surveys from the research literature (Sosu, 2012; Giancarlo, 2004). Sosu et al's and Giancarlo et al's quantitative surveys were designed to explore the connections between learning dispositions and critical thinking. I

used their survey prompts as a model for the interview questions I show in Appendix B _ and I also adapted questions from their quantitative surveys in order to connect my own qualitative study to previous empirical research. Their categories of dispositions served to advance my developing taxonomy of dispositions and I later connected this taxonomy to Driscoll and Wells' dispositional terms to the extent that I was able. I discuss Sosu et al's and Giancarlo et al's research on learning dispositions in Chapter 2, and provide the list of the project's survey questions in Appendix B. Survey questions were geared to elicit information about participants' dispositions toward learning, writing practices, and writing contexts. However, because survey data did not yield information that helped me understand the connection between dispositions and writing transfer, it is not included in this study.

*Phase II*

After graduating from high school, three participants attended the same local community college in the first year of post-secondary schooling, two attended the same local university in California, one attended a university out of state, and one attended a university in the state, but out of the local area. In Phase II of the project, I completed a total of four in-person or video-chat interviews that occurred during both the first and second semesters of participants' first year of college. (Video-chat interviews were necessary as some participants attended college out of the city or state where I conducted this research) I continued to schedule interviews in advance with students and allowed them to reschedule as needed. Interviews took place in October, November, and December of 2013 and January of 2014. Interviews during Phase II averaged 45 minutes in length.

To create comparable data across each phase, and because the contexts for learning changed across them, I asked the same or very similar questions during Phase II interviews as during Phase I (See Table 3 in this chapter and Appendix B), with the exception of personal, family, and language background questions. Therefore, as in Phase I, I began the initial interview of Phase II by asking participants to describe what "goes through your head" when they received a writing assignment. I repeated other interview prompts from Phase I as well, such as "Describe your level of confidence as an academic writer," and "What is most challenging for you when it comes to writing?" I also discussed students' college courses with them and current or anticipated writing assignments. I also added new questions to each interview in Phase II: "Does the writing you're doing in college remind you of high school writing in any way?" and "How is college and high school writing different? How is it the same?" For specific writing assignments, I asked: "Have you ever done this type of writing before?" As in Phase I, the questions that I asked in the second, third, and fourth interviews in Phase II were drawn from rich points or patterns of response from previous interviews, including Phase I.

I also collected writing prompts and or written work from participants. I focused my collection of documents on longer academic papers that instructors or professors assigned. If participant interviews were conducted via video-chat, I created a private space on Google drive for each individual student to upload their written work. I list the documents collected in Phase II in Table 4.

At the end of Phase II, students were again asked to complete the survey. The repeated interview approaches and surveys provided me with a way to cross check data; in effect,

in what ways did a participant's reports or descriptions of learning dispositions in interviews correspond across time? In what way did they correspond to survey data? How did survey and interview data compare for each participant across the high school to college transition? However, as survey data did not provide insights into how dispositions and writing transfer overlapped for these participants, survey data is not included in the findings for this project.

Table 4: Phase II Documents Collected

| **Type of document** | **Number of pages (average)** | **Classes Assigned** | **How many times assigned (total for all participants)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Essay | 4 | First Year Composition<br><br>Critical Thinking and Decision Making | 6<br><br>2 |
| Research Paper | 6 | First Year Composition<br><br>Critical Thinking and Decision Making<br><br>University Seminar<br><br>Philosophy 100<br><br>Health 100<br><br>Art History<br><br>Geology<br><br>Anthropology | 4<br><br>1<br><br>1<br><br>4<br><br>1<br><br>2<br><br>1<br><br>1 |
| Narrative | 3 | FYC | 1 |
| Business Plan | 3 | Business 100 | 1 |
| Reflective Paper | 2 | University Seminar | 1 |

*Data Analysis*

I conducted seven interviews for each of the seven participants across the two phases of the project (three interviews during Phase I and four interviews during Phase

II). In including seven participants as the final participant set, the total number of interviews transcribed was forty-nine. In my transcription documents, I created three columns: the time stamp for each question, the transcript, and space for my own memos. Transcript pages per interview varied, depending on the length of the interview, but the average total transcripts pages per participant was 150. This number might seem excessive, but my transcription process included three columns (see Figure 3.1, below) that allowed me to time stamp transcriptions as well as make notes during initial and subsequent coding passes. In all, then, I had approximately 1,000 pages of transcribed interviews. After each round of interviews in each phase I did "mini-transcriptions" where I transcribed and coded "critical moments" in the interview in the memo column, working to maintain a "reflective stance" to the data and maintaining a "sustained engagement" with participants and interviews (Lillis, 2008, p. 362). Later, I returned to each interview and transcribed it completely before beginning subsequent rounds of coding.

The first three sets of interview transcription data (one "set" being a "round" of interviews) helped me investigate participants' beliefs and attitudes about learning and writing before graduating from high school. The final four sets of interview transcription data investigated their attitudes in relation to college writing contexts, but also explored their perceptions of any connections to high school writing knowledge, the transition to college itself, the transition to college-level writing, and whether or not they felt they were able to use what they had learned in high school during college. The face-to-face interview setting allowed me to conversationally explore dispositions toward and perceptions of learning and/or writing transfer with participants.

I used grounded theory to code and analyze transcripts, primarily applying Charmaz and Belgrave's (2012) perspective that it is a process constituted by "flexible strategies" (p. 347). That is, I was not initially testing a previously derived hypothesis or theory, but rather I approached the data to expose patterns or "rich points" and then analyzed these in order to explain why these patterns or "rich points" appeared. At the same time, however, because I had explored existing research on transfer and dispositions, some theoretical or top-down definitions for these phenomena existed in my own understanding of and approach to data analysis. A grounded theory approach allowed me to approach data as a process of uncovering participants' perceived knowledge related to writing and learning tasks and to explore their dispositions toward learning and writing in order to get at how—or whether—these harmonize.

*Coding Methods: Interview Transcript Analysis*

In between interview rounds in both Phases I and Phase II, I used open coding to analyze the transcripts,. Once all interview data was transcribed from both phases, I cycled through interview transcripts to make preliminary coding decisions about the data. Because this research is about orientations to and attitudes and/or dispositions about writing and learning, I closely read through the transcripts to code and create categories that helped illuminate participants' orientations and dispositions. I used open coding as an initial approach to transcript analysis in order "identify and name specific analytic dimensions and categories" while still allowing the transcripts to reveal other analytical possibilities (Lillis, 2008). In the first rounds of open coding, as initial codes began to emerge or when a "rich point" was indicated in the data, I would write a brief analytical

memo about any perceived connections between dispositions and learning and/or writing. These memos allowed me to investigate potential categories as possible "core categories" (Holton, 2010, p. 21). Holton, referencing Glaser (2002), describes a core category "is discovered as it emerges through iterative coding, conceptual memoing, and theoretical sampling for further data to pursue and develop conceptual leads" (p. 30). Thus, using open coding as the initial approach, I was able to examine the interview data such that core codes and, later, preliminary theories emerged through the writing of memos about and subsequent coding passes through it. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) have described this as a process where the researcher is "simultaneously creating and solving a puzzle" (p. 144). To visually explicate my process of discovering and defining codes, I present Figure 3.1, which provides a view of my coding terms during the open coding process.

In this example, I determined names for categories based on patterns that emerged (e.g. "disposition") across transcripts. The category of "disposition," for example, emerged when participants discussed their attitudes toward writing, a task, a class, or teacher. These, along with the review of literature, led me to identify the general definition of dispositions which I use here. Initially, I did not create sub-categories for the code of "disposition"; later, during the selective coding process, these sub-categories were operationalized and labeled in alignment with Driscoll and Wells' categories for dispositions (self-efficacy; expectancy-value; self-regulation; and attribution).

Figure 3.1: Illustration of Open and Selective Coding

**"David": Phase I. Interview 2. 12th grade. May 2013 (Excerpt)**

| Time | Transcript | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| :39 | Me: So I'm actually studying what transformations you make as an academic writer between high school and college. I'm also looking at your influences and motivations, basically your attitudes toward writing. So I know you just finished writing something for Ms. xxx, where you got to choose a topic. When you get a prompt or any type of writing topic, what goes through your mind? | Standard interview question for all participants |
| | D: I feel confident (DS) most of the time. I feel confident (DS) in my writing skills and my ability to write, so usually I'm thinking of my prior knowledge (COG) of the topic and if I don't know it, I'll research the thing so I know what I'm getting into (DS) and then I'll dissect the prompt (WK) or the question, whatever it may be. | Disposition (DS)<br><br>Cognition (COG)<br><br>Writing knowledge (WK) |
| 01:59:00 | Me: Can you give me an example of how you approach a writing assignment or use your prior knowledge in writing? | |
| | D: Well, I've been taking college classes, so I know actually for my first college classes…I had philosophy last year and I was surprised. I got my paper back and I got a D. I was like D? I don't get Ds, what is this? (DS) And it was kind of a hit to me and it made me change (APP) my writing style. I saw the writing in comparison to high school. High school was like more elaborate, whatever you want, more or less, (DET) and then the college writing to me was more factual, straight to the point, like I said, a lot of facts (DET) | Disposition<br><br>Application<br><br>Detection: (DET)<br>--Perception of HS writing vs. college writing. Note that pt. uses one class (philosophy) as evidence for what "college writing" is. |

Categories were also informed in relation to "rich points" (such as "perception of HS writing versus college writing"). Since the study emerged from my interest in how writing knowledge transfers from high school to college contexts, these rich points were important for me to consider. Rich points did not always occur across transcripts and sometimes were singular in nature. Because, as I discussed earlier, rich points emerge when participants make meanings or practices "visible" (Green et al, 2012), however, they often could be grouped under one of the emerging core categories represented by the patterns of codes in the data.

In creating the core categories (for example "cognition," "writing knowledge," and "application" from Figure 3.1), I had to consider both existing definitions from the research literature and definitions that emerged in pattern form or rich points across transcripts. Therefore, codes were developed both inductively and from theoretical perspectives,, based on the data. "Cognition" emerged as an example where a participant had a type of awareness about their writing processes or practices (later, this code often correlated with the transfer step of "detect"); "writing process/ writing knowledge" was used as a code when a participant named a particular practice, skill, or process he used when writing or planning to write (later, this code was divided into subcategories of *types* of writing knowledge, which I describe below); and application/ learning was coded when participants identified a particular learning experience that was new to them or when they transferred writing knowledge from a previous context to a new context, even if that transfer was unsuccessful (later, this code often correlated with the transfer steps of "elect" or "connect").

Once the open coding process resulted in codes that seemed stable and reliable, I

developed operational definitions for each disposition in order to focus, abstract and organize the data from the initial patterns that emerged (as described earlier, for example, in naming and categorizing four types of dispositions). In this phase, because "dispositions," "context," and "cognition" were major themes or core categories, I began to consider the ways these themes might overlap and turned back to the existing research to help me generate some explanations. Therefore, as I moved into selective—or focused—coding, codes emerged primarily from synthesizing and applying definitions from theory and research on dispositions, transfer, contexts for learning, including *habitus* and communities of practice. The selective or focused coding process (Charmaz and Belgrave, 2012) occurred as I moved back and forth through conceptual memoing related to the core categories and by re-coding in order to "saturate" them. Holton describes saturation as the process in which "no new conceptual properties or dimensions are emerging" (p. 27). These subsequent phases of focused coding also revealed "sub-core" categories that were named using operationalized definitions from both existing theory or carried over from the open coding passes through the data. Focused coding allowed me to engage in cycles of comparison across codes, transcripts, and emerging concepts. For example, in seeking to apply Perkins and Salomon's *detect-elect-connect* view of transfer to the study, those terms became new codes for analysis. For example, "cognition" of prior knowledge, from the participant's perspective, often overlapped with the focused code of "detect." Therefore, where data were relevant to more than one category, those overlaps were noted.

An example of how selective coding led to richer and more theoretically-driven naming and definitions for codes is presented in Figure 3.2. This figure provides an

example of how the general core category of "writing knowledge" was refined is indicated by the sub-categories of "genre knowledge," "writing process knowledge," and "subject matter knowledge." These categories were adopted from and defined using Beaufort's (2007) conceptual framework for separating writing knowledge domains. (For more detail on definitions and examples of the selective coding process, see Appendix C.) Data analysis was both inductive and deductive, a combination of noting patterns and themes, an application of existing theoretical definitions for codes, establishing links and relationships across them, and comparing and contrasting the data from this study to the theories and definitions in the research literature.

Figure 3. 2: Illustration of Sub-categories from Selective Coding

**"David": Phase II. Interview 2. First Year College. October 2013 (Excerpt)**

| Time | Transcript | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| | Me: Before you said you sucked at intros and that you learned a lot from Ms. J. about intros. Did you find yourself using that pattern again? | |
| | D: It was different because that was like (ConA) analysis on literature and now this is more research based (GK) and at times I would use it, but...(EL) (WP) | Context awareness(ConA)<br>Genre knowledge (GK)<br>Elect—introduction writing (EL)<br>Writing process knowledge (WP) |
| | Me: So you modified it or grew out of it? | |
| 16:21 | D: I feel like, I like to think of it as having it in my arsenal. Like it's there if I need it but for right now it's not necessary. (PK) (DET) | Detect (DET)<br>Prior knowledge (PK) |
| | Me: Can you think of other things that are in your arsenal that you some times pull out? | |
| | D: I annotate a lot (SM). For the Haiti book, we would have quizzes and since I annotated, I was able to find answers really easily. (CN) I kind of summarized each page, or key points. (SM) | Subject matter (reading) knowledge (SM)<br>Connect (CN) |

*Reporting the Data: Telling Cases*

In reporting this data in Chapter 5, I chose two different approaches. First, I will present patterns or trends across the data from all seven participants in order to uncover answers to research questions and develop insights into the relationship between writing transfer, learning contexts and dispositions in terms of the data. Second, I present three "telling cases" (Mitchell, 1984). While I conducted the same number of interviews across each phase of this research with each of the seven participants, data from these three particular participants reveal distinct experiences of writing transfer (whether facilitative or prohibitive), dispositions toward writing, and perceptions of the experience of the transition as an academic writer from high school to college. Presenting "telling cases" in this study is a purposeful choice for reporting data. A "telling case" is similar to a case study, with the exception that, while case studies are often a reporting method for longitudinal research, telling cases illuminate qualitative data in shorter-term studies. In this way, a telling case is "not a representative case, but one that allows in-depth exploration of theoretical issues not previously visible" (Putney et al, 2000).

In both reporting approaches, researchers can consider multiple variables that represent complex phenomena, such as writing development, over a particular time period. The telling cases in this study are a way to highlight particular facets related to the research themes that emerged in the data. They enabled me to more thoroughly investigate, understand, and compare the patterns and trends that emerged from across the participant group. While both case study and telling cases are difficult to generalize from, they provide reporting methods by which researchers can test a theoretical or conceptual model, as I do in this study. Beaufort (2007) argues that such approaches,

since they are rooted in ethnographic methods are "ideal," since they " capture the nuances of what in fact is going on," in this case, from the actors' or participants' perspectives (p. 215).

## Methodological Limitations and Contributions

Telling cases allowed comparison and deep examination of trends that emerged from the entire group of participants. While I used participants' papers and survey responses as ways to guide interview conversations, findings ultimately emerged from the self-reports and self-perceptions of participants. However, because this study focuses on dispositions of learners, and since it is very difficult to objectively determine and designate dispositions by simply observing participants' actions (for example, how can "confidence" or self-efficacy be observed), self-reporting and self-perception are appropriate methods by which to gather this type of data.

As Beaufort (2007) recognizes in her study, data-driven theorizing about writing development is a difficult undertaking, since there are a "number of variables at work, many of which are hidden from the researcher's scrutiny" (p. 215). This methodological approach and the conceptual model that is presented in the following chapter provides a framework that can be tested and refined in subsequent studies that seek to explore the relationship between dispositions, contexts for learning, and writing transfer.

# Chapter 4: Conceptual Model for Analysis

In the Literature Review, I described Perkins and Salomon's detect-elect-connect (D-E-C) as one of several frameworks for considering the phenomenon of transfer. Perkins and Salomon argue that D-E-C as provides a more "full" picture of transfer, one that looks at more than just the moment where prior knowledge is *connected,* or adapted and applied, to a new learning task and situation. In fact, as Perkins and Salomon argue, the full experience of transfer includes moments of, first, *detecting* connections to prior knowledge *electing* to pursue them, and then, finally, *connecting.* In this chapter, I use their D-E-C framework as the anchor for this project's larger, comprehensive conceptual model for understanding writing transfer as it works in relationship to dispositions and in context. In sum, my conceptual model uses the steps of D-E-C as a dependable and linear chronology for how transfer occurs (learners must first *detect*, before they can *elect*, and they must *elect* before they can *connect*). The D-E-C steps, in other words, provide a stable core to the model proposed here, which considers how dispositions and learning community of practice knowledge awareness (which I will refer to as COP awareness) work in relationship to transfer. The attributes associated with dispositions and COP awareness, however, are less stable than D-E-C; their characteristics are more flexible and integrated (or not) across the D-E-C steps. Because they interact in relationship with each step of D-E-C, they affect both whether and how D-E-C is enacted. In this chapter, I begin by describing how D-E-C, with the added step of *enculturation*—anchors the model of transfer that I propose. Then, I add components to the D-E-C anchor of the model in two "layers"—first, dispositions and second, COP knowledge

awareness. At the end of this chapter, I present the entire model as a way to conceptualize a process in which writing transfer as a D-E-C-Enculturation process occurs (or not) in relationship to dispositions (or the *habitus* of the individual agent) and contexts (or the *habitus* of the field in which learning takes place).

Figure 4.1: The Anchor to the Model: the D-E-C-Enculturation Spiral

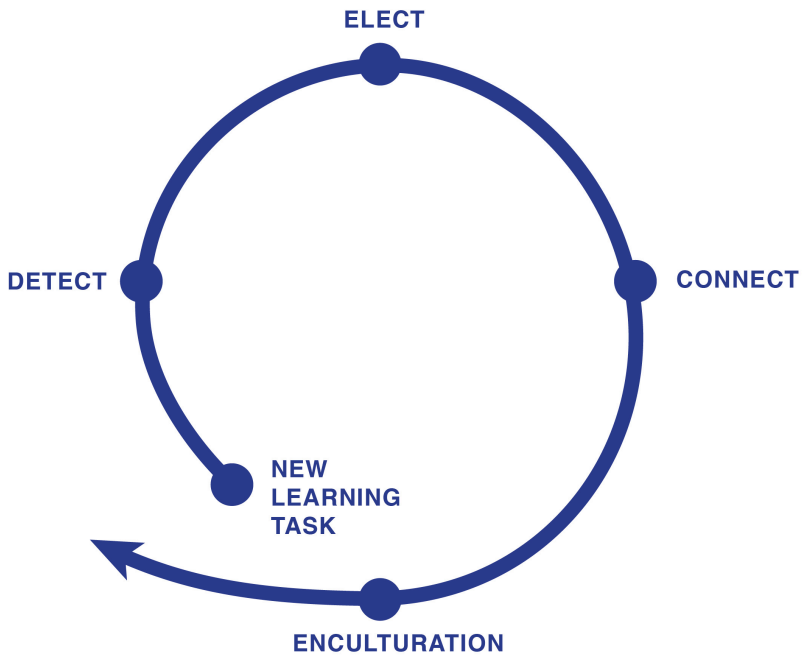


Figure 4.1 presents the stable components of the model—the D-E-C framework with the added step of *enculturation*. In Figure 4.1, I introduce a fourth "step" to their framework of D-E-C. This is the space where *enculturation* into new knowledge or community practices takes place, which may (or may not) result for a learner *after* he moves through the D-E-C chronology. This step of enculturation unfolds—or spirals-- to the next learning task and can inform, change or develop one's dispositions toward subsequent learning and transfer opportunities, which I explore in detail in the Discussion chapter. After moving through the steps of D-E-C-*Enculturation*, a learner then encounters and engages a subsequent learning task and transfer opportunity and the process begins again—in the same or other COPs. The dispositions that are elicited or cultivated in the original task may play a role in subsequent transfer opportunities. Thus, transfer as it occurs in specific CoPs creates, reinforces, or inhibits particular dispositions of learners—and this affects their approaches to subsequent situations. Thus, since learners move from task to task and context to context, transfer can be described as a spiraling by which learners transfer writing knowledge and learning dispositions as they move through the steps of *detect, elect,* and *connect,* and are (or are not) *enculturated* into new knowledge or specific learning community practices. As I show in the findings, for the participant group in this study, dispositions play a particular role in both whether and how learners move through the steps of D-E-C-*Enculturation*.

In this model, the transfer event begins with the new learning task. Starting at this point, in engaging the new task, a learner first *detects* any connections to prior knowledge and then *elects* whether or not to pursue these connections before they *connect* prior

knowledge to the new learning task and experience a degree of successful learning—which leads to a degree of *enculturation*—in the COP. This is shown through the blue spiraling process of D-E-C-*Enculturation*, where one "step" leads to the next.

This model aligns with Perkins and Salomon's view of D-E-C; that is: during any transfer opportunity a learner has the opportunity to cycle through all the points of the spiral as she moves toward the potential to transfer knowledge (to any degree) in the step of *connect* and, finally, to *enculturation* (to any degree) into new knowledge and/or a new level of apprenticeship in a COP. In any given transfer opportunity, learners may also *not* move successfully through D-E-C-*Enculturation,* due to the agency of the learner, the abilities of the learner, the learning context, or a combination of these. In fact, the transfer opportunity might stop at the *detect* step. Transfer might *not* occur, not because a learner simply fails to *connect,* but because they exit the D-E-C-*Enculturation* process at a particular point based on factors concerned with internal agency, such as dispositions, or external context, such as the learning environment, or both.

It is important to note that learners are engaged in various learning tasks, contexts and transfer opportunities at any given time; thus, transfer can be imagined as multiple spirals that occur at once—and at different rates—in any given moment. Prior and Shipka's theory of *chronotopic lamination* helps to situate the idea of multiple spirals of transfer occurring at once. Though their explanation of chronotopic lamination concerns *trajectories* of practice—or "the dispersed fluid chains of places, times, people, and artifacts that come to be tied together in trajectories of literate action," movement on these trajectories, in terms of knowledge development, occur in particular contexts where transfer may or may not occur. I have isolated one of these instances in the conceptual

model, but the spiral points to movement on any given trajectory of knowledge development. This construction of transfer indicates it is an incredibly complex phenomenon. I offer Figure 4.1 as a way to isolate and conceptualize one transfer event. In this anchor to the model, the spiral represents transfer as occurring across reliable, linear and chronological steps of D-E-C. It is shaped to illuminate the idea that *detect-elect-connect* is a stable process in which "detecting" and then "electing" *must* occur before "connecting". In this research project, the findings are presented in depth for each "step" of Figure 4.1—or through the "steps" of *detect, elect, connect* and *enculturation*. While D-E-C-*Enculturation* is a stable framework, the scholarship—and this research—suggests dispositions play a key role in how one encounters or moves through the steps. As a result, it's necessary to introduce dispositions as a more fluid element in the D-E-C-*Enculturation* process, which is explained through Figure 4.2.

*The D-E-C-Enculturation Model for Transfer in Relationship to Dispositions*

In Figure 4.2, I adjust and extend the anchor model shown in Figure 4.1 by layering dispositional elements over it. This layer is presented as a way to operationalize and visually conceptualize transfer to include learners' orientations to—or dispositions toward—learning and transfer tasks. *Dispositions* in this study specifically refer to learners' intrapersonal orientations to learning in terms of transfer tasks and contexts. A definition of dispositions as intrapersonal allows me to understand how practices like *self-efficacy, expectancy value*, *self regulation,* and *attribution* work in relationship to the actions associated with knowledge transfer and helps reveal emotional orientations to learning that are not often explored in relation to it. In Figure 4.2, I use the same four

terms for dispositions in the D-E-C-*Enculturation* framework. Figure 4.2 provides a view of how transfer and dispositions work in relationship to each other from the actor's—or learner's-- perspective.

Figure 4.2: The D-E-C-Enculturation Model for Transfer in Relationship to Dispositions

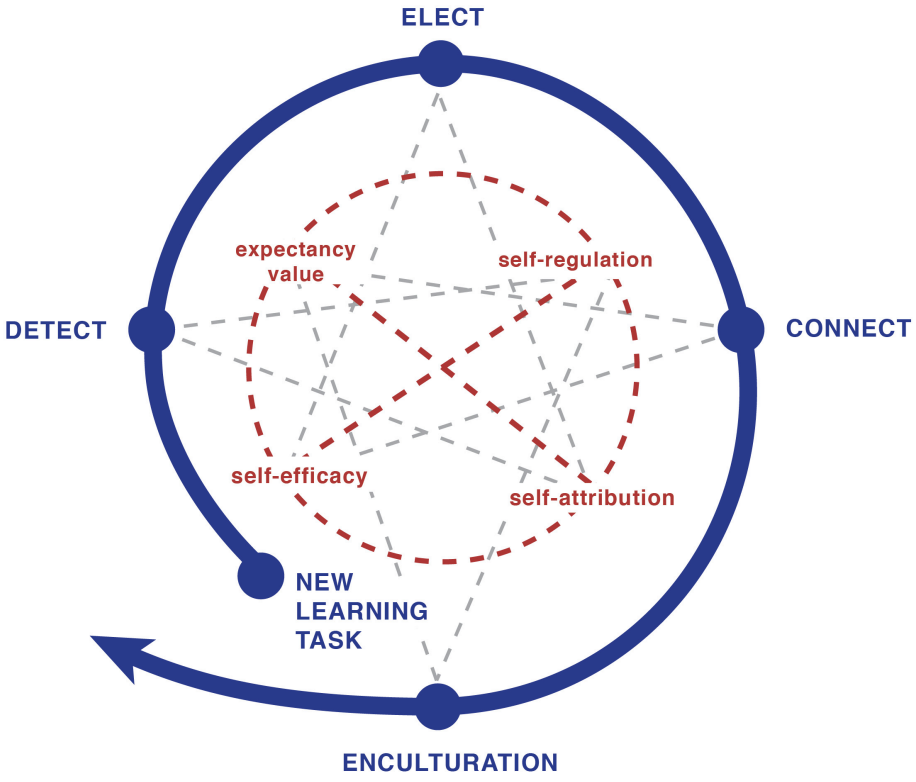


Figure 4.2 is a "constellation" that links the stable steps of D-E-C-*Enculturation* to four dispositional orientations to learning. It highlights an actor-oriented perspective of dispositions as they occur internally or intrapersonally for the learner as she is engaged in a transfer task. Through this constellation, it is possible to see how dispositions work *generally* and *specifically*. It illuminates 1) the interactions between these dispositions themselves, and 2) that particular dispositions are elicited in response to particular steps in D-E-C. A general finding was that dispositions did not work in isolation from other dispositions; instead, they were flexible and were often elicited concurrently or iteratively across the "steps." With the D-E-C-*Enculturation* framework as the anchor, each disposition can—and often did, as the findings will show-- move fluidly and influentially into and out of any step in D-E-C-*Enculturation*. This is indicated by the gray dotted lines that link each disposition to each "step" in the D-E-C-*Enculturation* linear chronology. At the same time, dispositions work *specifically* in relationship to specific steps of D-E-C-*Enculturation*. Therefore, have located each disposition on the blue spiral in the in the space during learning where it was most commonly used by participants in relationship to the transfer task. For example, among the study participants, in the *detect* step, *self-efficacy* was almost always enacted to some degree, as learners' evaluated their degree of confidence in completing and succeeding in a learning task based on an assessment of their abilities. Immediately upon engaging the transfer task—or even in anticipation of it (such as when a learner knew that her instructor was going to present the class with an essay prompt that day in class)—learners oriented themselves to a task using their self-efficacy, for better or for worse. Therefore, *self-efficacy* is purposefully located on the blue spiral after the starting point (where a learner is given a new learning

task) and prior to the *detect* step.

Because more than one disposition can be elicited concurrently or iteratively for learners as they move through D-E-C-*Enculturation*, dispositions can appear at any time in this chronology. Still, they are not *everywhere* at once in this process, at least not in a conscious way. For one participant in this study, for example, self-efficacy informed his decisions to *elect* to pursue connections to prior knowledge and then later when actively making *connections* to it. Another participant described the values she associated with completing a particular task *after* she turned it in, but she had not described this value when this task had been assigned. Dispositions can also appear concurrently with other dispositions. For example, a learner might orient himself to a learning task by *detecting* connections to prior knowledge by evaluating his degree of self-efficacy *and* his ability to self-regulate—or manage—the completion of the task. The way that dispositions can appear concurrently in any step of D-E-C-*Enculturation* is shown through the red dotted lines, and, as the findings support, highlights that dispositions do not often appear in isolation from other dispositions.

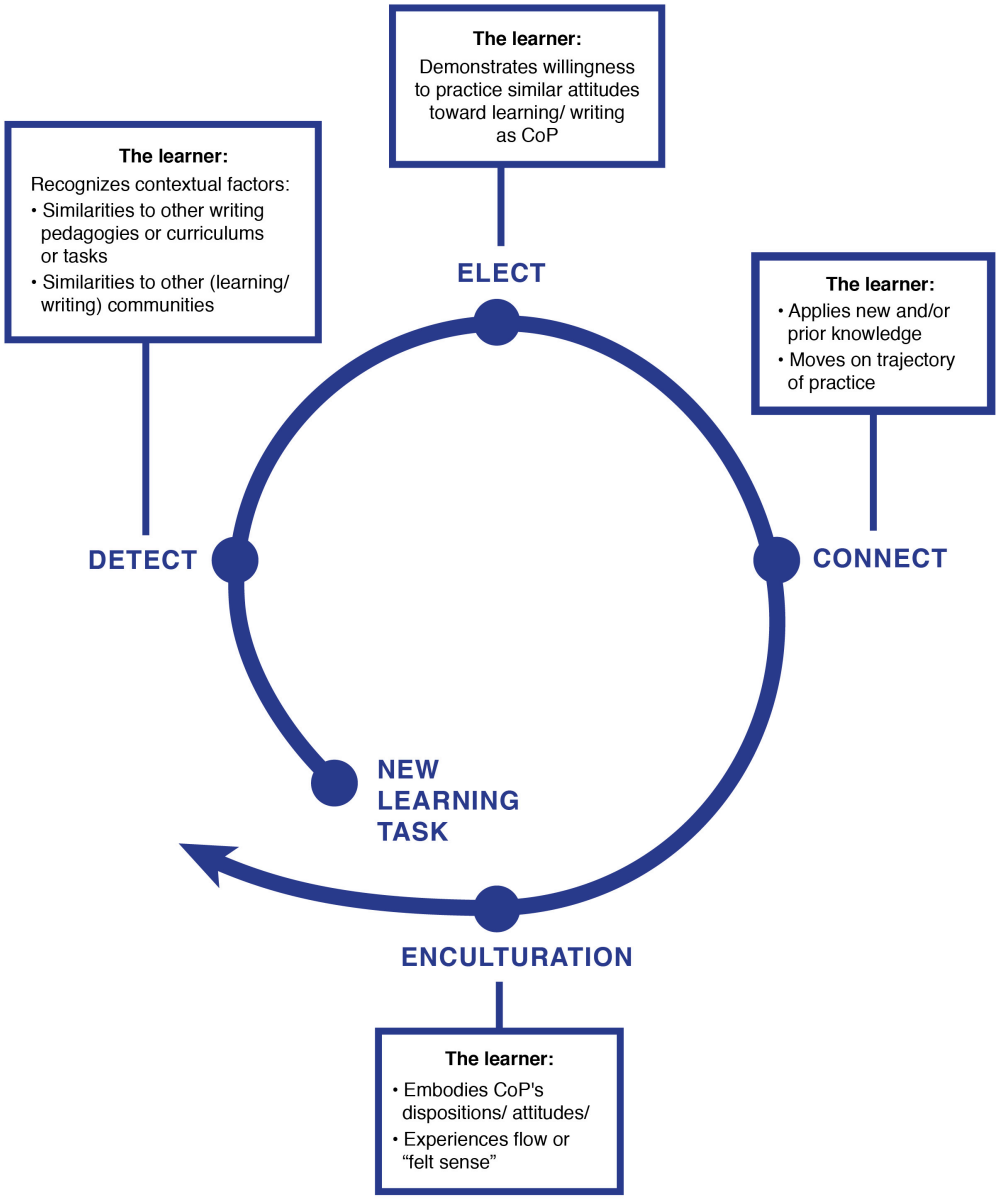
*The D-E-C-Enculturation Model for Transfer in Relationship to COP Awareness*

Figure 4.2 shows how dispositions naturally integrate into and orient learners toward knowledge transfer through the D-E-C-*Enculturation* view. In Figure 4.3, I show a different view of D-E-C-*Enculturation* in order to explore how *contextual* factors (based on theories of *habitus* and *communities of practice*) integrate into the D-E-C-*Enculturation* anchor framework. While Figure 4.2 includes attention to intrapersonal and dispositional orientations toward learning, Figure 4.3 shows that these orientations

are always situated in specific contexts. Figure 4.3 presents an "actor-oriented," outwardly focused view that takes into account how the learners in this study perceived specific contexts for learning and how these perceptions affect opportunities to detect, elect, and connect. Figure 4.3 thus shows how the learner may encounter and engage the habits and practices of the learning community in relation to a specific learning task.

In Figure 4.3, each step of *detect, elect,* and *connect* is shown in relationship to particular practices and experiences learners have when engaging new learning tasks in any academic community of practice. As the findings will show, the relationship between particular types of COP awareness and each step of D-E-C-*Enculturation* is relatively stable. For example, when engaged in the step of *detect,* the participants in this study nearly always evaluated similarities between the task and the context for the task to previous learning contexts. Therefore, I have connected specific types of COP knowledge awareness to the D-E-C-*Enculturation* step in which it was most commonly described by participants. This is indicated by the black boxes linked to the steps of D-E-C-*Enculturation* to specific COP knowledge awareness. However, like dispositions, specific expressions of COP awareness can be expressed repetitively across the steps of D-E-C-*Enculturation*. For example, a learner might evaluate the degree of similarity to other writing pedagogies, curriculums, or tasks in other contexts at any point in D-E-C-*Enculturation*. These connections are indicated by the orange dotted lines.

Figure 4.3: The D-E-C-Enculturation Model for Transfer in Relationship to COP Awareness



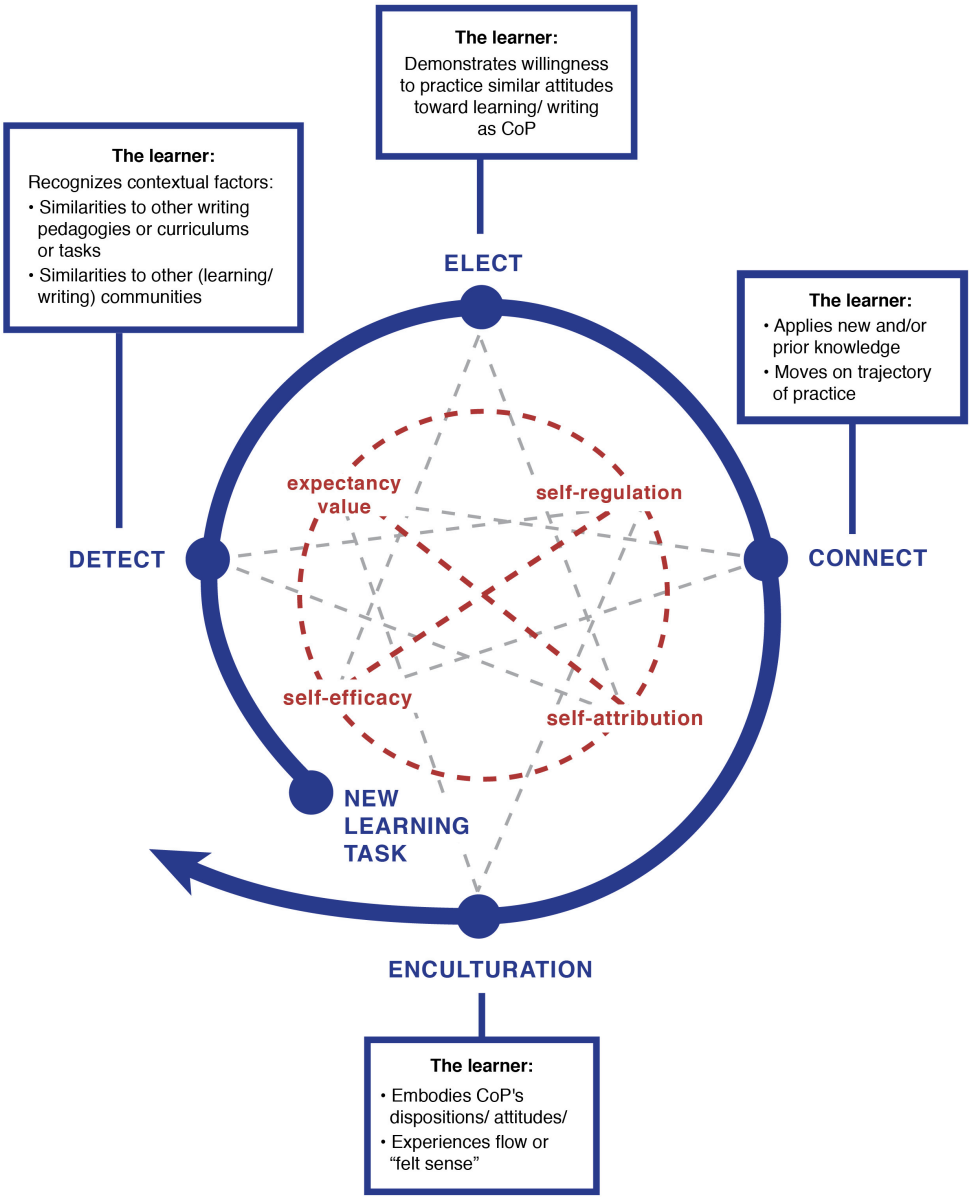
*The Conceptual Model: The D-E-C-Enculturation View of Transfer in Relationship to Dispositions and COP Awareness*

Taken together, Figures 4.2 and 4.3 provide a comprehensive view of transfer that explores the relationships between dispositions, COP knowledge, and a D-E-C-*Enculturation* view of transfer. This model presents a view of transfer that seeks to capture some of this phenomenon's complexity, particularly how dispositions toward learning work in relation to it as well as how the steps of *detect* and *elect* figure in to the entire transfer process. In essence, in using Figure 4.4 as a "total" framework for analyzing data, I can explore how the "steps" of D-E-C-*Enculturation* are enacted in relationship to learner dispositions and COP awareness.

This comprehensive model helps me address the research questions in this project that explore dispositions toward learning and self-perceptions of learning contexts as well as the degree to which these dispositions and perceptions facilitate or inhibit transfer across specific writing contexts—in this case, as they occur across the high school to college transition. In other words, it allows me to conceptually locate where and how learning dispositions are elicited by local or specific writing situations and the ways in which participants' learning dispositions are or are not part of their habits of dispositional response as they make decisions about how, whether, and/or when to engage in one or more steps of the D-E-C-*Enculturation* process. Therefore, the final model (Figure 4.4) seeks to address the "possible cultural, communal and socially distributed nature of dispositions" (Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström, p. 24). While some of the actions and attitudes presented in Figure 4.4 may not happen at all for learners, this model enables me to explore how individuals and contexts overlap to elicit dispositions and specifically

how these overlaps occur in specific writing situations.

Figure 4.4: *A Conceptual Model: The D-E-C-Enculturation View of Transfer in Relationship to Dispositions and COP Awareness*



I present Figure 4.4 as a way to organize and analyze dispositions as part of transfer in relation to the research questions in this project. This comprehensive structural model contributes a particular perspective to the existing research on transfer, one that expands previous definitions of it to encompass a broader view, as seen through the D-E-C-*Enculturation* framework. Furthermore, this model situates transfer in and aligns it to dominant theoretical views of this phenomenon, particularly transfer as it unavoidably occurs in COPs and its relationship to dispositions. To justify this model, I articulate and argue for a view of writing transfer that is organized by three principles: 1) that writing transfer is entirely and unavoidably situated in the context in which it occurs; 2) that a more complex view of writing transfer includes not just the moment where learners *connect* prior knowledge to the learning task at hand, but also the moments where learners *detect* connections to prior knowledge and *elect* whether or not to pursue and abstract from the types prior knowledge that they detect; and 3) that the intrapersonal factors of learners, including their learning dispositions, are elicited within learning contexts and tasks, and, thus, are part of what makes learning and transfer successful-- or not. The Findings chapter, which follows, uses coded interview data to show these principals in action.

# Chapter 5: Findings

*"I'm still waiting for the whole package in writing."*—David, First Year College Student

I organize this chapter according to findings that resulted from this project's research questions and according to the D-E-C-*Enculturation* view of transfer that has emerged as a useful framework for interpreting them. I show how each finding revealed particular details about the relationship between dispositions and transfer opportunities as they occurred in specific contexts for learning and writing. In discussing each finding, I show first how patterns in the data across the coded interview transcripts for all seven participants illustrate the idea that dispositions work in relationship to *detecting* prior knowledge and *electing* to pursue it. Then I present in-depth examples from three of the "telling cases" in this study; these include: David, who had highly facilitative dispositions toward learning and writing; Sam, who had highly inhibitive dispositions; and Julian, who had both facilitative and inhibitive dispositions. These more descriptive examples from the telling cases allowed me to compare and more deeply analyze patterns that occurred in the data across participant interviews. I also describe trends in participants' sensitivities to learning contexts; that is, how these contexts elicited particular inhibitive or facilitative dispositions toward learning or writing in specific and how—or whether— participants' dispositions moved across contexts, in particular the high school to college transition. The presentation of these findings illuminates the D-E-C-*Enculturation* model in action and shows how the learners in this study used their dispositions in different ways in relationship with each of the D-E-C-*Enculturation* transfer steps.

I conducted transcript analysis of interview-data in order to discover the self-perceptions of participants regarding their dispositions toward learning, but also to find out what their perceptions were of the prior knowledge they *detected* and *elected* to pursue in terms learning contexts and writing knowledge. The data revealed participants' perceptions about the types of writing knowledge they did (and did not) consider as they moved across contexts for writing and how their dispositions toward writing and learning facilitated or inhibited their decisions about whether or not to apply this knowledge. In this way, I uncovered particular social, emotional and psychological orientations to learning—that is, participants' *dispositions*—as revealed through their reported self-perceptions. Therefore, in this chapter, I report how the dispositions of participants facilitated or inhibited *detection* of prior knowledge (of learning contexts or writing knowledge itself) and *election* to pursue it in order to help illustrate that *detect* and *elect* are important processes in the transfer process. I also share data that elucidates participants' attitudes toward particular skills, knowledge, and processes that moved them *toward* or *away from* the action of *connecting* as well as their feelings and attitudes about learning after they did or did not *connect.*

Specifically, the findings will show first how *detecting* prior knowledge worked in relationship to participants' dispositions and how particular dispositions were elicited in or by educational contexts. Then I follow with how participants' *elected* whether or not to pursue prior knowledge connections in relationship to particular dispositions. Finally, I describe how they experienced *connecting* prior knowledge and *enculturation* (to any degree) into new knowledge and/or contextual attitudes or practices. In discussing the *connect* and *enculturation* steps, I also consider participants' degree of satisfaction in

their learning as well as how such satisfaction is situated in specific contexts.

The reporting of trends and patterns across participants draws upon data from interview conversations with each of the seven subjects in this study. Crouch and MacKenzie (2006) suggest that in a qualitative framework, research based on interviews from a small sample of cases can help "penetrate social life beyond appearance and […] enhance the validity of fine-grained in-depth inquiry in naturalistic settings" (p. 1). By looking very closely at data from interviews with these seven participants separately in my analysis, and by looking at how this data suggested similarities and differences across participant experience, I was able to thoroughly investigate some of the more social, emotional, and psychological phenomena that informed their learning and transfer opportunities. In fact, my analyses revealed patterns across these seven participants' descriptions of their learning and writing experiences in high school and college, including the language choices they used to discuss them. I highlight these similarities across interview transcript data as trends. I also present "rich points" that emerged from single participants and/or point to outlier data that emerged as comparisons or contrasts to trends in the data. Then I show how one or more of the telling cases of David, Sam, or Julian help to more deeply reveal the trend or pattern. The findings reported in this chapter show the elements of the conceptual model in action.

*Finding 1: Self-efficacy as a Powerful Initial and Antecedent Disposition*

Results from interview transcript analysis showed that self-efficacy was a foundational disposition in initiating the D-E-C-*Enculturation* transfer process. In our interview conversations, self-efficacy was elicited *first* when I asked participants open

questions about writing processes or learning practices—including what prior knowledge they *detected.* Self-efficacy also worked as an antecedent to other learning dispositions, especially self-regulation. For the seven subjects in this study, self-efficacy worked as a powerful dispositional orientation to new tasks and as an antecedent to *detection* of prior knowledge, to motivation for engaging the task, and, specifically, to self-regulatory behaviors. Additionally, participants with high self-efficacy in writing and/or learning also more clearly described *detections* of prior knowledge than participants with low self-efficacy.

The first finding provides insight into these research questions:

- What learning dispositions and habits of response to writing tasks do students perceive or describe in both high school and college writing-focused classes? How do dispositions toward writing and learning to write transfer across the high school to college transition?
- What generative dispositions facilitate either new knowledge or transfer of knowledge in academic writing situations? What disruptive dispositions inhibit new learning or transfer of prior knowledge for them?

*Trends across the participant group*

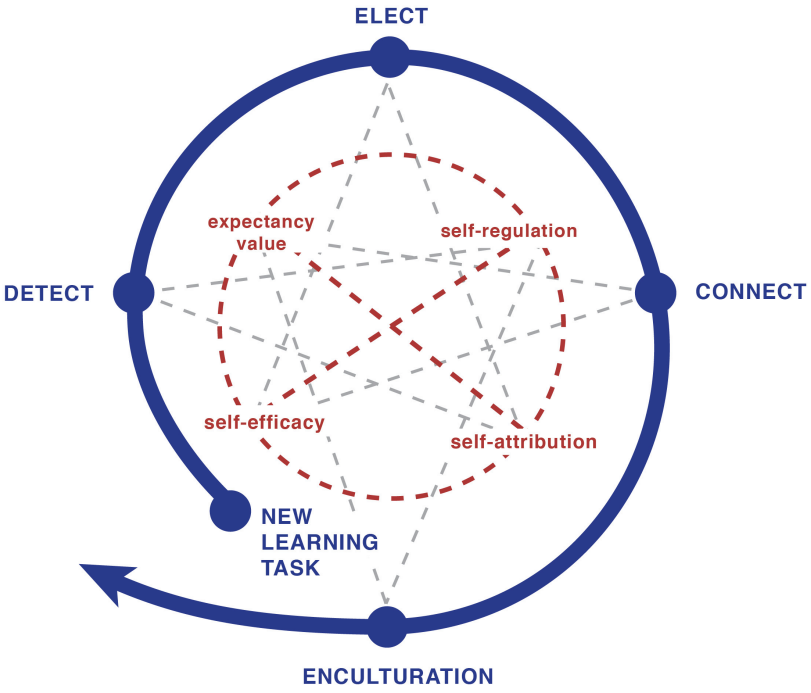
At some point in our conversations, each participant referenced his or her level of confidence in academic writing abilities. Using existing research and to define my coding for self-efficacy, I defined this disposition as a belief construct where participants connected their confidence in writing to their capabilities.

When discussing their self-efficacy as writers, participants were prompted with

different types of questions that asked them to *detect* their prior writing knowledge in some way; I asked them, for example: "When you get a new writing assignment, what goes through your head? What do you think about?" This question was open enough that it could uncover what prior knowledge students *detected* when engaging a new writing task. However, in the most common response to these types of questions, participants first referenced their personal efficacy or confidence in their writing abilities rather than reporting specific connections to prior knowledge. For example, five out of the seven participants discussed writing confidence in response to the question "When you get a writing assignment, what goes through your head?" and all seven participants discussed their self-confidence in writing at *some* point in our interviews—and not because I prompted them to do so. What was curious to me was that in response to open-ended questions ("What goes through your mind?" "What do you think about?"), participants often began their answers by articulating their sense of self-efficacy as a way to orient to a task or to the writing process. This type of orientation to writing involved discussing writing confidence in general terms, e.g. "I am confident as a writer" or "I am not good at writing." In other parts of our conversations, participants discussed their degree of confidence in a particular writing ability, such as using quotes from readings as evidence. Furthermore, their self-efficacy was also situated in their degree of "liking" or "not liking" to write.

An important feature of this finding was that discussions of participants' self-efficacy was elicited *first* when I asked them an open question about what they did—including what prior knowledge they *detected* by reflecting on their experiences—in response to a new task. In the conceptual model, I have placed self-efficacy nearest to the *detect* step

on the *D-E-C-Enculturation* spiral, since it was a disposition that oriented these participants to new writing tasks.




While participants' self-efficacy was also elicited at other points throughout their writing and transfer processes, the findings show that self-efficacy works as a powerful dispositional orientation to new tasks since it was elicited by participants when I asked them what prior knowledge they *detected*. Self-efficacy also worked as an antecedent to other dispositions and behaviors, such as motivation for engaging the task, and,

specifically, self-regulation.

David, for example, referenced his high confidence in his writing skills when I asked him to describe "What goes through your head when you get a writing prompt for school?" He answered: "I feel confident most of the time. I feel confident in my writing skills and my ability to write…" Rather than referencing *how* he approaches the prompt via particular processes or *what* prior knowledge he might detect in shaping his response to the task, he first establishes his high self-efficacy as a writer. In response to the same question, Julian referenced his low self-efficacy; he was less confident as a writer: "Well, first, I'll start to worry…about how long it has to be or how hard it will be graded and the portion of it that will count toward the grade, cuz I don't really like to write. I don't like how I write." In terms of overall findings, three out of the seven students in this study reported high self-efficacy in their writing skills and knowledge, and four reported low self-efficacy. Table 5 shows this data.

Table 5: Self-efficacy in Writing as Reported by Participants in Both Phases

| **Self-Efficacy (toward Writing)** | **High** | **Low** |
|---|---|---|
| David | X | |
| Sam | | X |
| Julian | | X |
| Lily | X | |
| Janice | | X |
| Soren | X | |
| Andrew | | X |
| TOTAL | 3 | 4 |

Each participant's evaluation of his/her self-efficacy in writing did not change across the high school to college transition. That is, no participant reported high self-efficacy in

writing in high school and then low self-efficacy in the first year of college, or the converse of this. This finding gives some insight into the research questions for this study that ask how dispositions toward writing and learning move across the high school to college transition. Overall, participants' degree of self-efficacy as writers did *not* change across this transition. High self-efficacy in writing in high school remained high in college for some (3/7); low self-efficacy in writing in high school remained low in college for the rest (4/7). However, in more pointed questions about specific genres, such as "How confident are you at writing research papers?" participants' self-efficacy fluctuated in both phases of the study, depending on their assessment of their knowledge of the genre and the contextual changes that impacted assigned genres. I talk more about the connections between self-efficacy, genre knowledge, and contexts later in this chapter.

Another element of this finding concerns participants' overall high self-efficacy when it came to *general* learning, even if they lacked confidence in writing. When I asked them "How do you feel about learning, in general?", five of seven participants reported feeling confident or "liking" or "loving" it. This is shown in Table 6, which compares degree of self-efficacy in learning to degree of self-efficacy in writing for each participant.

Table 6: Self-efficacy in General Learning and Writing as Reported by Participants in Both Phases

| | **Self-Efficacy (toward Learning)** | | **Self-Efficacy (toward Writing)** | | **Overall Types of High Self-Efficacy** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **High** | **Low** | **High** | **Low** | |
| **David** | X | | X | | Both |
| Sam | | X | | X | Neither |
| Julian | X | | | X | High Learning |
| Lily | X | | X | | Both |
| Janice | X | | | X | High Learning |
| Soren | X | | X | | Both |
| Andrew | | X | | X | Neither |
| TOTAL | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |

When I pushed each participant to elaborate on their feelings toward learning, they often referred to their enjoyment and confidence in learning. Soren described that he likes "feeling engaged." Lily described that she enjoyed "learning new things," and David and Janice echoed Lily's sentiments. Julian described that he enjoys feeling "satisfied" with his learning achievements, and Soren and David used the word "satisfied" in relation to *why* they liked learning as well. It might be argued that "liking" or "loving," to write, or "feeling satisfied" with learning are *not* examples of self efficacy, yet these concepts of "liking" to learn (or not) as a "felt sense" often correlated with participants' descriptions of how *well* they felt they wrote or learned. For example, when I asked them "What do you love/like/not like about learning/writing?" 4 participants shared a particular type of knowledge (almost exclusively related to writing processes) that they felt they did well with (or not) or understood (or did not).

It is interesting to note that two participants, Julian and Janice, felt low self-efficacy in *writing* but reported high self-efficacy in *learning.* This data points to one of the ways that self-efficacy works as an *antecedent* to elicit or inform self-regulation, and the types

of behaviors that indicate self-regulation, including setting goals, monitoring and evaluating learning, and help-seeking. Janice, for example, articulated her self-efficacy in learning through her confidence in her ability to stay organized and not procrastinate—which are self-regulatory behaviors. Janice managed her writing tasks in an organized way (as she reported), set goals for herself, sought out expert feedback on her writing. Ultimately, she was satisfied with the grades that she received on writing assignments, despite the fact that she was not highly confident in her writing abilities. When I asked Janice to describe what she thought about when engaging a new writing assignment, Janice reported that she worried about her writing and felt she was not a "strong writer." In other parts of our conversations, Janice reported that she felt excited about her college classes and enjoyed learning new things. As Janice endeavored to *detect* prior knowledge in response to a new writing task, her confidence as a writer could be characterized as low, yet her self-efficacy as a learner was high. While moving through the subsequent steps of *elect, connect* and *enculturation*, Janice used self-regulation (especially high self-efficacy toward learning and study skills) to contribute to her perceptions about how to gain expertise in writing. One factor to note here is that, for these participants, low self-efficacy toward writing needed to be balanced by high self-efficacy toward order for the *D-E-C-Enculturation* transfer process to be initiated for these learners and in order for them to move forward on trajectories of practice.

The two participants who reported low-self-efficacy in writing *and* learning—Sam and Andrew-- also reported low levels of self-regulation, including procrastinating on assignments, not completing homework or reading tasks, not delaying other social gratifications in place of completing school work, and not paying attention in class. They

each described feelings of low self-efficacy as a writer or learner when first encountering a new writing assignment. This space is also the potential moment of *detection* of prior knowledge. Their low self-efficacy also corresponded with low levels of or a lacking self-regulation. These combined dispositions inhibited them from *detection* and *election and* the *D-E-C-Enculturation* was not completed. In the same way that a combination of *facilitative* dispositions caused *D-E-C-Enculturation* to progress for those participants with high levels of self-efficacy and self-regulation, combinations of inhibitive dispositions caused Sam and Andrew to stall out in the D-E-C-*Enculturation* process.

Five participants in this study who reported high self-efficacy in writing or learning also described high self-regulation, as shown in Table 7. Lily, David and Soren each reported high self-efficacy in writing *and* learning and also reported highly self-regulatory behaviors including time-management, seeking help, applying study strategies, and setting learning goals. Because self-efficacy was often reported as an orientation to *detecting* prior knowledge, and because (as I describe later in this chapter), self-regulatory behaviors were often reported as part of *electing* and *connecting,* the data suggests that self-efficacy worked as an antecedent to self-regulation for these participants in both high school and college. Successful self-regulatory behaviors also led to a degree of satisfaction in learning as reported by some participants. Lily, for example, described feeling "proud of my achievements" in writing when she had finished an assignment, even if her grade was not at the top of the class. When I asked her what made her feel proud of her work, she responded that she had "stayed organized and paid attention" to instruction. Soren and David also mentioned pride in their work and satisfaction with their completion of assignments and grades as related to work ethic.

Such satisfaction contributed to these participants' *enculturation* into new knowledge or social practices, such as new understandings of genre or process and/or practices of the specific writing classrooms in which they were students. Satisfaction and *enculturation* then informed or enhanced their self-efficacy. The spiral shape of the D-E-C-*Enculturation* spiral represents this recursive and interactive nature of dispositions.

To illustrate the importance of self-efficacy as an initial and antecedent disposition in the D-E-C-*Enculturation* process of transfer across contexts for the participant group, I now focus on data from three telling cases: David, Sam, and Julian. Each of these telling cases provides particular insight into how self-efficacy worked in relationship to the steps of D-E-C-*Enculturation.* Specifically, they provide in-depth illustrations of how self-efficacy was elicited *first* when I asked participants open questions about writing processes or learning practices—including what prior knowledge they *detected.* These telling cases also show how self-efficacy worked as an antecedent disposition to others, especially self-regulation.

*Finding 1/ Telling Case 1: David*

*Detect: David's Sense of High Self-efficacy and other Facilitative Dispositions*

David was a high achiever in high school, earning high grades and serving as class president. He chose to attend a four-year state university far enough away from home that he could live in the dorms and have a "full college experience." David showed high self-efficacy in writing and learning.

In applying the conceptual model to David's academic writing experiences in both 12$^{th}$ grade and his first year of university, we can begin with the point labeled "new

learning task." In each interview across both Phases I and II, I asked David to describe what went through his mind when he gets a writing assignment. In his responses, he described high levels of self-confidence in writing, often using the word "confident" to indicate his feelings about writing itself, or particular genres of writing, such as "research paper" or "literary analysis essay." In the second interview of Phase I (when he was in 12th grade), for example, when I asked him to explain what "goes through his mind" when he received a writing prompt in his AP Literature class, David said, "I feel confident most of the time. I feel confident in my writing skills and my ability to write, so usually I'm thinking of my prior knowledge of the topic and if I don't know it, I'll research the thing so I know what I'm getting into and then I'll dissect the prompt or the question, whatever it may be." In this excerpt, David's confidence facilitates his ability to *detect* prior knowledge ("I feel confident in my writing skills…so…I'm thinking of my prior knowledge on the topic").

David's high self-efficacy also led him, during 12th grade, to believe that he would do well in college. This belief was boosted, he said, by taking college classes while in high school, which was part of his high school model. When I asked him to compare high school to college writing, he described his experience this way:

> Well, I've been taking college classes, so I know actually for my first college classes, I had philosophy last year and I was surprised. I got my paper back and I got a D. I was like "D?" I don't get Ds, what is this? And it was kind of a hit to me. It kind of made me change my writing style. I saw the writing in comparison to high school. High school was like more elaborate, whatever you want more or less, and then the college writing to me was more factual, straight to the point, like I said a lot of facts.

David's comments here demonstrate a different—and contrastive—example to how he *detected* connections across contexts. In his philosophy course, he wrote a paper where he used his prior writing knowledge, but unsuccessfully (or as a case of negative

transfer), since he received a "D". In this example, however, his dispositions toward writing and learning lead to an adjustment to his "writing style." His high self-efficacy ("I don't get Ds) and self-regulation (via self-assessment of the poor grade) helped him realize that he needed to "change [his] writing style." In this example, he also *detected* an awareness to and assessment of different contexts for writing, i.e. his philosophy course and his experiences with "high school" writing. When I pushed him to elaborate on those differences, he went on to say "High school writing is, like, more subjective. Like however you want to explain it. They never really ask for sources...or like sources and articles and stuff." This comment shows David's perception that there was a difference in expectations from high school to college writing, and reveals that *detection* as part of the transfer process required an assessment of the similarities and differences across *contexts* and consideration of how an application of his prior knowledge across contexts was or was not useful to facilitating learning.

Thus, David assesses the differences in writing contexts by examining the similarities-- or, in this case, the dissimilarities-- between expectations and evaluations across them. Furthermore, his self-efficacy works as a facilitative disposition to help him orient to these different writing challenges. His comments about how he responded to the D-grade shows his movement from *self-efficacy* to *self-regulation,* in that his beliefs about his writing capabilities ("I don't get Ds, what is this?")—his *self-efficacy*—helped him to make a change ("...it was kind of a hit to me. It kind of made me change my writing style")—or to *self-regulate*. David was not daunted by the D grade to a degree where it caused him to lose confidence in his abilities to write for his college courses. He persisted in his philosophy class, adjusting to the new context and earning increasingly

better grades on his work in that course over time, indicating how *self-efficacy* worked as an initial disposition to other dispositions that facilitated his learning.

In his first semester of college, David continued to report a high self-efficacy or strong confidence in his writing abilities. In his first year of college, David described two of his four classes as "easy" (a Business 100 course and Asian American Studies) and his more challenging courses as "not hard" (English and Critical Thinking). In terms of *detecting* connections to prior knowledge and applying them to across contexts, David showed an awareness of classroom community expectations across contexts and a willingness to apply new writing processes in this excerpt:

> Me: Have you thought about things that you used in high school writing but that now you're using in different ways?
>
> D: Um, yeah. I think really the difficulty. I've been able to apply that. The AP English course was really rigorous, so that helped me adjust to college. And then, this year, something that I've never done was writing multiple drafts because that was really helpful. I feel really confident in what I'm turning in so…
>
> Me: So you didn't write multiple drafts in high school?
>
> D: No, I never did.

This example shows David's ability to *detect* similarities across contexts for writing ("The AP English course was really rigorous, so that helped me adjust to college…") and also points to the fact that he *detected* a gap in his prior knowledge where he had not written multiple drafts in his process of completing writing assignments ("…something that I've never done was writing multiple drafts…"). He pursued closing this gap and applying new writing process practices (multiple drafts), in part, because of his high self-efficacy ("I feel really confident in what I'm turning in…"). David's application of this practice to his college writing contexts was reinforced by the community's (or

instructor's) expectations that multiple drafts were required. In this example, David used his high self-efficacy to detect previous writing knowledge and gaps in his knowledge.

As a contrastive example, in the next section I discuss data that shows how Sam did and did not *detect* connections to prior knowledge and how his low self-efficacy inhibited his learning. Sam's low self-efficacy in writing worked as an antecedent to other inhibitive dispositions.

*Finding 1/ Telling Case 2: Sam*

*Detect: Low self-efficacy as an Inhibitive and Antecedent Disposition*

> Me: When you write for school, do you ever try to do new things, or try to use things that you've learned in other classes or situations?
>
> S: I try to stick with the same type of strategy because I don't think I'm good at writing for school.

I began this section on Sam with an exchange from one of our conversations in order to show an example of how Sam reported low self-efficacy in writing, but also how he did not always look for specific ways to *detect* prior knowledge or practices that might facilitate his writing development. Sam graduated from high school and was accepted to and attended a four-year state university, though he was put on academic probation at this university at the end of his first semester.

Repeatedly, Sam reported a low self-efficacy in academic writing and at different points reported that he did not like school. Sam did report enjoying creative writing and would write poems and stories on his own as a hobby. While Sam reported that he liked "to make up little stories," when I asked him about his approaches to or attitudes toward

writing in school, he also reported low confidence in his abilities and a lack of enjoyment of school-based writing. Meanwhile, when I asked him how he approached new writing tasks, he said that he read the prompt and tried "to do what the teacher wants" and that he would "just write the way I write."

I had hoped that my questions would prompt Sam to reveal some ways that he applied his enjoyment of and relative confidence in creative writing to *detect* connections between his creative writing knowledge (or enjoyment) to his academic writing contexts or tasks. But when I specifically asked him: "Do you ever use any of your approaches or skills in creative writing for your school-based writing?", he identified his higher self-efficacy in creative writing as problematic in his academic writing:

> I catch myself when I write an argument essay, I catch myself writing like little stories from my life I guess. I guess I need to back up what I believe because I usually just give examples from my life or my feelings instead of using the text or some evidence.

In this excerpt, Sam reports that he applies the wrong sort of knowledge from a creative to an academic genre, an example of negative transfer. He also shows that he is aware of what he thinks he should do ("I guess I need to back up what I believe…"), but never reports actually *electing* to apply this knowledge. In a contradictory response to a similar question, Sam reported *not* using creative writing skills in his academic writing:

> Me: Could you ever see yourself making a connection between creative writing and academic writing?
>
> S: No I don't…I haven't tried that.

In all other questions where I asked Sam to discuss what sorts of writing skills, knowledge, or practices he might think about when engaging a new writing task, he

always reported that he read the prompt: "I just read the prompt. I see what I'm supposed to do." Meanwhile, he often also reported low self-efficacy in writing, saying that he didn't think he was a good writer, that he would put the "wrong things" into his essays, and that he didn't like writing. These sorts of evaluations of his work were often retrospective; that is, he reported thinking that his submitted work was "good," but later, when his papers were returned to him, he realized something different. This mismatch in his self-evaluations of drafted work compared to submitted and externally evaluated work contributed to an overall shift in self-efficacy. While his initial evaluation of his work as "good" could be considered a high self-efficacy, his evaluations didn't appear to connect to any contexts or expectations for writing, as he understood them. When his papers were returned to him with feedback or grades, he described his written work as "horrible." Meanwhile, he did not report *detecting* ways to apply learning from previous contexts to new ones. His general low self-efficacy was exhibited in *contexts* for writing, where his papers were evaluated in these contexts as not as "good" as he had initially thought. Sam's low self-efficacy also inhibited him from making necessary changes that he seemed aware were needed. The following exchange from Sam's first year of college provides particular insight into how his understanding of his performance on a rough draft worked to reinforce low self-efficacy:

> Me: So let's talk a bit about this paper. You said a minute ago "I think it's bad."
>
> Sam: Yeah, it's horrible.
>
> Me: Why do you think that?
>
> S: To me it's horrible because the first essay that I did I thought was really good-- the first draft-- and then I showed my professor and she said I did the wrong prompt and I had to rewrite everything so that really put me down and then I just tried to do the best I could with that.

Me: So it hasn't been graded yet?

S: No, I submitted it, but…

Me: So what's horrible about it?

S: I don't know, I haven't read it at all. I just think it's not gonna be good. I'm always frightened that the thing is not gonna be good.

Me: So this first one you wrote, you felt inspired and then this one you did what the instructor told you, so you feel less, like…

Sam: Yeah. Less confident in this one. I honestly don't even remember what I wrote.

In this exchange, Sam feels briefly confident in his first draft, but upon his instructor's review he is told he "did the wrong prompt," which "really put me down." In redrafting and revising the assignment according to the correct prompt, Sam feels his attempt is "horrible" and he is "frightened" about how it will be reviewed. However, Sam also reported that he didn't use particular self-regulatory practices, such as seeking help from his professor or any writing support system on the new draft, or reviewing his work or writing process practices, such as editing or revising ("I haven't read it at all."). This data exhibits the relationship between self-efficacy and self-regulation, particularly in regards to the latter's behavior of persistence. Sam's shift to low self-efficacy after his paper was returned worked prohibitively in eliciting the additional self-regulation he would need to complete the task according to the instructor's expectations.

In a trend that emerged across the full group of participants, I noted that self-efficacy was regularly reported as an orientation to *detecting* prior knowledge, and that self-efficacy worked as an antecedent to self-regulation. For Sam, low self-efficacy worked as an antecedent to *low* self-regulation and inhibited his *detection* of prior knowledge.

Even when Sam evaluates his initial draft as "good," he had an overall negative feeling about writing ("I don't like to write.") and did not look to apply prior knowledge or to *detect* gaps in his prior knowledge  In this exchange from our final interview in Phase II, Sam and I discussed the fact that he continued to feel low self-efficacy as an academic writer:

> Me:  Do you feel like the amount of knowledge that you have, like if you get a grade that you're not happy with, is that based on a lack of knowledge?  Or is the knowledge there but is just not showing up in your work?
>
> Sam:  Yeah.  Like I can think it but I'm not really sure how to write it in like a persuasive essay and all that.
>
> Me:  Do you feel like you need more practice?
>
> S:  I guess I don't really practice that much.  Or when the teacher shows us how to do it, I don't really pay attention.  There are some things I catch but then, I just continue writing the way I write.
>
> Me:  So are you satisfied with your grades on your written work?
>
> S:  Oh no.

This exchange again reveals that dispositions like self-efficacy and self-regulation work recursively in relationship to each other (and, as I describe later, to other dispositions). First, Sam cited his lack of confidence in his writing skills ("I'm not really sure how to write it, like a persuasive essay…"). Next, he referred to low self-regulation ("I don't really practice[…]I guess I don't pay attention…") before revealing that "I just continue to write the way I write." He seemed aware that he repeated some practices that were not useful to successfully completing particular writing tasks. Sam's responses showed that he either did *not detect* prior knowledge or that he *detected* and *elected* to pursue the wrong types of knowledge.

Sam's overall low self-efficacy points back to a pattern that emerged across interviews

with him. He reported that he did not like to write and was not "good at writing," when I asked him to think of writing practices, knowledge or skills that he called on when he received a new writing task. He also said that he "forgets" what he learned. Sam reported that he would rather write how the teacher for the new task was asking him to rather than try to abstract prior writing knowledge from previous learning contexts. For Sam, low self-efficacy inhibited his progress and development as an academic writer, which was also exhibited in the low achievement he reported.

These telling cases of David and Sam show that self-efficacy initiated self-regulation (or did not) and that it facilitated or inhibited *detection* of prior knowledge. What happens, however, when a student has both high and low dispositions?

*Finding 1/ Telling Case 3: Julian*

*Detect: Low self-efficacy in writing; high self-efficacy in learning—Does he self-regulate?*

In the cases of David and Sam, facilitative and inhibitive dispositions worked in tandem. For Julian, this was not the case. Julian reported low self-efficacy in writing, but also reported *some* inhibitive self-regulatory behaviors, including "doing homework the night before it was due." Julian additionally reported high achievement in both high school and college and high self-efficacy in learning (Julian was the valedictorian of his high school class and was accepted to—and attended—an elite private college on scholarship). With this mix of facilitative and inhibitive dispositions and practices, Julian's ability to *detect* prior knowledge was impacted by them, such as his tendency to "worry," but he still persisted and looked for prior knowledge connections:

Me: When you get a writing prompt for school, what goes through your head?

Julian: Well, first, I'll start to worry…about how long it has to be or how hard it will be graded and the portion of it that will count toward the grade, cuz I don't really like to write, so I'll just start worrying. Especially when a teacher says there's going to be a lot of writing in the class.

Me: How do you face that fear?

Julian: I just keep going and take it day by day. Hopefully it won't be as hard as I thought it would be.

In this excerpt, Julian connected his feelings about writing ("…I don't really like to write…") to his "worry" about the writing assignments he was given. Still, he had a "hopefulness" that the task would not be too difficult and he articulated that he "keeps going" by taking it "day by day." These somewhat vague references to his ability to persist in the face of his low writing confidence and in response to challenges in academic writing were echoed in other conversations that we had. While, as I mentioned earlier, Julian felt he had "bad" self-regulatory habits that led him to procrastinate and complete his writing assignments "the night before they were due", he also reported facilitative self-regulatory habits, such as help-seeking (he took drafts to his campus writing center and had a friend, who he felt was a strong writer, provide feedback on his writing during college). He also practiced self-evaluation, saying, "I always read over what I wrote." Still, Julian's low self-efficacy as a writer did not change across the high school to college transition. During our interviews in high school, he mentioned more than once that he didn't like to write. In our final conversation, when Julian was in college, we had this exchange:

Me: Overall, do you consider yourself a good writer?

J: No, every time I reread what I wrote, I think that doesn't make sense. I don't like how I write. I think of something in my head when I'm writing, but then I

> don't write that, because I think it's going to be bad, so I just give like a robotic style of writing. I just try to go for the grade; I don't really go for expressing myself. I don't put what I really want to put.

Part of Julian's comments here reflect his low self-efficacy—"I don't like how I write" and "I think it's going to be bad." These dispositions toward his writing can be viewed in relationship to how he approaches and values the task: "I try to go for the grade." Meanwhile, despite his high achievements, when I asked Julian if he was satisfied with his grades, he said "No. I'm never satisfied." Nevertheless, Julian did well in both high school and college—and did engage some self-regulatory behaviors. Julian's disposition to be less-than-satisfied with his grades may be self-regulation in disguise, as it can be interpreted as a form of self-evaluation that leads to setting—and hopefully achieving—particular learning goals.

In terms of *detecting* prior writing knowledge, the self-efficacy of David, Sam, and Julian was often a part of our discussions when I asked them to think about *how* they used their prior writing knowledge when engaging a new writing task. Rather than speaking about their prior knowledge specifically, each of these participants often talked about whether they "liked" to write or not—or whether they thought they were good at writing.

Self-efficacy, then, was an important disposition in relationship to *detecting* prior knowledge for these participants. Low self-efficacy inhibited *detection* of prior knowledge and corresponded with other inhibitive dispositions to also prevent *election* to pursue new or prior knowledge. High self-efficacy worked to facilitate *detection* of prior knowledge and was antecedent to other facilitative dispositions, such as self-regulation.

*Finding 2: How (and whether) participants used dispositions to detect and elect to pursue types of prior writing knowledge*

For this finding, data from interview transcripts showed that participants with high self-efficacy in writing tended to articulate particular *types* of writing knowledge that they *detected* as potentially useful in new learning contexts. In terms of this writing knowledge, genre knowledge and writing process knowledge were the most often reported types of writing knowledge that participants *detected*. Participants with facilitative dispositions also evaluated whether or not they *elected* to pursue connections to their prior knowledge.

This finding illuminates answers to these research questions:

- To what extent do students mobilize learning dispositions in local or specific writing situations in order to *detect* connections to prior knowledge? To what extent do students *elect* to pursue these connections?
- To what extent do students mobilize learning dispositions in local or specific writing situations in order to *detect* connections to prior knowledge?

*Trends across the participant group*

As I completed rounds of transcript analysis, a general core category of "writing knowledge" emerged in terms of *detected* prior knowledge for the participant group. However, different *types* of writing knowledge were indicated within this core category. In order to operationalize these types of writing knowledge, I adopted the sub-categories of writing knowledge and definitions for them from Anne Beaufort's (2007) conceptual

framework. This framework operationalizes writing knowledge into five domains in order to argue for a view of writing development as inclusive of writers' degree of knowledge in each of the domains. Beaufort's framework is divided into the sub-categories of discourse community knowledge, genre knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, writing process knowledge and subject matter knowledge. (For more detail on definitions and examples from the data that are coded into these domains, see Appendix C.)

*Genre knowledge and detection of dissimilarities:* Using Beaufort's framework to define writing knowledge domains, I defined genre knowledge as the degree of understanding of standard disciplinary genres and/or their features and/or rhetorical aims. When it came to genre knowledge, participants reported a *detection* of *dissimilarities* between prior writing knowledge and what knowledge they thought they needed for the new task. This finding references Reiff and Bawarshi's (2011) finding of "not talk," where students recognize what genre they are *not* being asked to write and then work to "abstract and repurpose strategies from prior genres into less familiar genres" (p. 328). For example, all seven participants reported their *detection* of the *differences* in genre expectations between high school and college. All seven participants discussed the in-class timed essay (such as AP Literature prompts) and "Literary Essay" as genres they learned to write during 12$^{th}$ grade. During the first year of college, however, they reported writing business plans, lesson plans, lab reports, analyses, research papers, reflective essays, and general "essays." When I asked participants "Does any of the writing you're doing in college remind you of writing you did in high school?", they all reported that college level writing was *dissimilar* to writing they did in high school and

some went on to describe differences in terms of the genres types assigned across this transition. When I asked participants to articulate the differences between these genres, however, their characterizations were somewhat vague: "Um, I just know it's not the same as a literary essay," said Lily. "College papers need to be longer," said Julian. "I need to add more fluff to my writing in college," said David.

*Rhetorical knowledge as "writing for a grade":* Findings also showed a tacit application of rhetorical knowledge for some participants with facilitative dispositions who were able to *detect* rhetorical *dissimilarities* across writing situations. I defined rhetorical knowledge as situational understanding, audience awareness, and understanding of a text's exigence. For the four students in this study who took AP Literature during high school, all had facilitative dispositions and each discussed an awareness of the audience for their essays in that class (a judge or pseudo-judge who evaluated their writing on the AP rubric) and the goals of the literary essay genre within this particular writing situation—to pass the AP exam. In college, these four participants had a sense of the broad and predominant rhetorical purposes for responding to a given writing task: getting the assignment done for a grade. But they did not report understanding of any specific audience beyond the instructor for any of their college-level writing assignments, nor any purposes for their writing beyond receiving a grade. This finding is not surprising, however, since, as Beaufort argues "Given the constraints of the social context in school, [students have] limited opportunities to learn the intricacies of the rhetorical situation[s]" they may encounter beyond the classroom (p. 133). In this study, however, even though students lacked sufficient rhetorical knowledge in terms of situating writing, those with facilitative dispositions worked

toward the goal as they understood it: earning the highest grade possible.

It is interesting to note that no data revealed participants' *detection* of subject matter knowledge or *detection* of discourse community knowledge—as I'm defining them via Beaufort. Discourse community knowledge is a larger domain that encompasses the more specific types of writing knowledge: genre, rhetorical, subject matter, and writing process knowledge. However, as Beaufort specifies *discourse community knowledge* involves an understanding the "underlying goals and values" of a discourse community, Participants did not, in their reporting, demonstrate awareness of *discourse community knowledge* when I asked them about their purposes for writing or learning in the specific disciplines and classrooms where they were engaged. *Subject matter knowledge,* via Beaufort, concerns an understanding of central processes and frames for analysis. Wardle (2011) would simplify this to suggest that *subject matter knowledge* concerns understanding who we are as writers and why we write in any give discourse community. While I combed over the transcripts repeatedly to look for connections to these types of knowledge, participants did not report an awareness of either. While this might be attributed to the types of questions I asked, I want to include this *lack* of reporting in the data. In fact, in responding to open and generalized questions posed in every interview, such as "What do you think of when you get a writing prompt?" or "What went through your head when the teacher assigned this writing task?", it is important to note that none of the seven participants discussed the overarching communicative goals for writing in a particular genre, like a business plan for example, or the values of a discourse, such as those expectations for writing within a specific community. This absence in the results highlights what types of writing knowledge students consciously *detected* and *elected* to

use in their new writing tasks—and what types of knowledge they did not.

*Writing process knowledge:* Overall participants reported that they *detected* and, sometimes, *elected* to pursue prior *writing process* knowledge when engaged in a new writing task. I defined writing process knowledge, via Beaufort, as any degree of understanding of how to accomplish writing tasks and articulation of composing practices. When I asked participants to describe how or if they used knowledge from high school when they wrote for college, their answers predominantly concerned their composing practices. Table 7 shows the number of times that the participant group referenced *detecting* and/or *electing* to pursue particular types of prior writing knowledge.

Table 7: Types of Writing Knowledge Referenced

| TYPE of **Writing Knowledge** | # of Participants that referenced each type (out of 7) | # of mentions across all transcripts |
|---|---|---|
| Discourse Community Knowledge | 0 | o |
| Subject Matter Knowledge | 0 | 0 |
| Genre Knowledge | 3 | 8 |
| Rhetorical Knowledge | 2 | 2 |
| Writing Process Knowledge | 7 | 22 |

The high number of times that participants referenced writing process knowledge as well as the fact that all participants reported prior writing process knowledge as something they *detected* and often *elected* to pursue provides insight into how students consciously viewed their own writing knowledge and may reveal particular gaps in it. They primarily *detected* and *elected* to apply prior knowledge of composing practices, such as how to write an introduction or integrate a quote, but also other processes such as writing annotations and protocols for analyzing writing prompts. Because very few of

the participants reported *detecting* prior rhetorical knowledge, we can conclude, perhaps, that they don't report what they don't perceive.

In another form of *elect,* some participants reported applying *new* (or at least previously not used) writing process knowledge, such as drafting. In these cases, participants were sensitive to the values of and/or the expectations for developing writing expertise in the college-level writing context. For example, both Soren and David reported not writing rough drafts while in high school or at least not revising purposefully. Both of these participants reported, however, using drafting more meaningfully in college. During our interviews while he was in college, Soren reported re-reading his rough draft before writing his final draft ("which I had never done before") and David reported that in college he "actually edited content" from rough draft to final and that in high school he "never really took rough draft and final draft seriously."

The telling cases of David, Sam, and Julian further illustrate these findings about the *types* of writing knowledge that participants *detected* as potentially useful in new learning contexts. The telling case of David shows an in-depth example of how his facilitative dispositions better equipped him to evaluate whether or not he *elected* to pursue connections to prior knowledge in the D-E-C-*Enculturation* process of transfer.

*Finding 2/ Telling Case 1: David*

*To Elect (or Not): More of David's Dispositions at Work: "I like to think of it as having it in my arsenal."*

When he reflected in our interviews about academic writing during his high school senior year and as an AP Literature student, David talked about some of the things that he

had learned from his AP teacher and the course. As an AP Lit student, David reported changing his writing style, as the following interview excerpt details:

> Me: Do you ever try new things in your writing?
>
> D: This year I've actually changed my writing structure. Specifically for the AP [exam]. I actually know the structure in my head. Um, I kind of copied it in a way, from...We got a writing prompt, it was on "The Evening Hawk," I still remember, and we had to write an essay and everybody did pretty bad. And she gave us an essay of what an ideal...what an 8 [score was]...what a person got an 8 on and how a person got a 9, so from those essays I saw whichever one I liked the most, and then, kinda took their structure.
>
> Me: You used a model to build...
>
> D: Yeah.
>
> Me: So can you think of something that you changed structure-wise? Is it like, overall, paragraphs, intro, vocab...?
>
> D: It was the intro. And as well the paragraphs. Because before I would, like...for my AP exams I only wrote four paragraphs, and you see other people writing five and six. That's something I learned this year. That you don't need to be so wordy and, like, you can just... so my intro has also changed...In "The Evening Hawk," blah blah blah, Robert something, whatever..That's something I learned because before I used to have like a padding to my intro, like a little background on what I'm talking about, I'll introduce the tag, and I'm like, whatever. But now I'll go straight into, like...the thing.

In this interview excerpt from 12th grade, David described a way that he *elected* to pursue adaptation to his prior writing knowledge to meet the demands of a context or a task. He had a sense of the genre constraints around introduction writing in academic essays, but, as he noted, he liked to have a "padding" to his introductions. In detecting his prior writing knowledge of introduction writing and *electing* to pursue that connection, David also repurposed and adapted this knowledge. In order to write well in AP Literature, he studied successful examples of the AP literary analysis paper and, in his words, "took" the structural elements of introduction writing in the examples and layered

them over his existing knowledge of introductions. This adaption concerned applying a sentence structure that often occurs-- or is expected to occur-- in the opening of a typical literary analysis essay for AP exam preparation. In this type of sentence, the writer introduces an author, the title of the work and the writer's analysis (David's example was "In 'The Evening Hawk,' blah blah blah..."). David *elected* to adapt his writing to include this sentence strategy for writing introductions, and he did so by examining successful essays in context of AP Literature. This example also points to how David *self-regulated* his learning by conducting an evaluation of his first paper (where all students, according to David, did "pretty bad") and studying the elements that would move his writing toward the higher score. David's behaviors of monitoring and directing actions toward his learning goals (to do better on the AP practice exams), was one indication of his high *self-regulation*. In the conceptual model, self-regulation is placed on the linear trajectory of D-E-C-*Enculturation* between the steps of *elect* and *connect* since that was where, in this process, it was most often elicited by participants. In this example, David used *self-regulation* to facilitate his *election* to apply (or *connect*) new genre conventions (e.g. writing more paragraphs than four and applying a particular introduction style), but it was also a way to reflect on previous learning tasks and his performances on them.

In a follow-up interview, when David was in his first year of college and had completed about half of his first semester, we discussed his approach to writing introductions again:

> Me: Before you said that you learned a lot from Ms. C. about intros. Did you find yourself using that pattern again in your college courses?
>
> D: It was different because that was like analysis on literature and now this is more research based and at times I would use it, but...
>
> Me: So you modified it or...you grew out of it?

> D: I feel like, I like to think of it as having it in my arsenal. Like it's there if I need it but for right now it's not necessary.

This excerpt again shows how David adapted his prior knowledge—specifically, his writing process knowledge of a particular composing practice-- to fit the new learning tasks and writing contexts he was encountering in his first year of college. In this case, he chose *not* to use a particular strategy—that of the introduction sentence pattern he learned in AP Literature—but he was aware that he might use it again at some point ("I like to think of it as having it in my arsenal."). While he did not refer specifically to his own confidence in this excerpt, his awareness that he had particular strategies in his "arsenal" to use as he willed was a reflection of his high self-efficacy. He *detected* the differences between genres from 12th grade ("analysis on literature") and his first-year college courses ("research-based") and *elected* whether or not to use particular writing strategies across these genres. He "stored" his writing strategies in his "arsenal," which he took out when he deemed them useful to the task; such *willingness* describes that there was conscious decision-making occurring during the *elect* step of transfer for David.

For example, in response to a different writing task in a different course, David pulled this introduction composing practice from his "arsenal"; that is, he *elected* to pursue this connection to his prior knowledge. In his final paper for Asian American studies, he was asked to use the course text to analyze three Asian religions. David referenced what he learned in AP Literature from "Ms. C." as useful for this learning task:

> D: Ms. C. is awesome because I see the type of work that we get here and I feel like that her, um, her expectations and her…the work she expected was so much higher than here. Um remember we talked about the format in which I would write? Where it would be "In blah blah blah, author...," you know?
>
> Me: Yeah.

D: I'm even looking at this paper write here, like the first line is "In…" [reads title of book and author]

Me: So you're using that sentence format.

D: Yeah, so that structure is still there. And it's been working, so don't fix what isn't broken.

In this exchange, David reported that he simply used the exact pattern he learned in high school, because it worked in that context. Still he showed an awareness that only some or only parts of his prior writing knowledge from high school would be useful, depending on the context for writing, and his high self-efficacy in writing facilitated this. His statement "Don't fix what isn't broken," indicated that that he felt he did not *need* to change or abstract this particular knowledge. At the same time, his awareness that he had prior writing knowledge to use in his "arsenal" reveals that he knew that he could *elect* to pursue connections to it, when and if he deemed it useful.

*Finding 2/ Telling Case 2: Sam*

*Detecting a Lack of Prior Knowledge; Stalling out at the "Elect" Step of Transfer*

As I reported earlier, interviews with Sam revealed that he did not enjoy academic writing and that rather than look for *detections* to his prior knowledge, he would simply "stick with the same strategy" and "just write the way I write." Sam's low self-efficacy led to a failure to detect what types of prior knowledge he might have had. Nevertheless, Sam had passed had graduated from a college preparatory high school and had been accepted to a four-year university, so I concluded that he *must* have had some types of writing knowledge. However, when Sam was in college, I asked in various ways across our interviews about how or whether he used prior writing knowledge. In response, he

repeatedly reported his lack of writing confidence in relation to the writing knowledge that he felt he did *not* have. Thus, Sam *detected* that he *lacked* prior writing knowledge, as can be seen in this exchange from our first interview of Phase II, when Sam was in college:

> Me: For either of these pieces, did you use anything that you learned in high school?
>
> S: No. Oh yeah. I used MLA format, just for the works cited.
>
> Me: What about anything like…writing drafts, the intro, transitions…
>
> S: I'm still stuck on writing a thesis. I can't write a thesis.
>
> Me: What's hard about that?
>
> S: I guess getting my point across.
>
> Me: So, in either of these papers, did you feel like you tried to do things new to you as a writer?
>
> S: I don't think so.
>
> Me: Did you use things you knew from before?
>
> S: I know that I have to use transitions and everything and I know when I put in a quote, I can't put in a floating quote, but I never really learned how to master that.

At the end of the exchange, Sam *detects* connections to prior knowledge as things he knows he *should* do in an essay, but that he doesn't feel he knows *how* to do. Furthermore, his articulation of his lacking prior knowledge is all in reference to a perceived weakness in composing practices, or lacking writing process knowledge, as he put it "I know that I have to use transitions and…I can't put in a floating quote, but I never really learned how to master that." As I reported earlier, Sam also had low self-regulation, where he said he didn't "practice" getting better at writing. At two points in

our conversations during Sam's first year of college, he said he "half-assed" his writing assignments. At the same time, Sam did not point to any type of writing knowledge that he felt confident in or that he *elected* to pursue. Even his enjoyment and practice of creative writing did not appear to *connect* to his academic writing practices (When I asked him if he could see himself making any connections between creative and academic writing, he said "No, I don't…I haven't tried that."). In this way Sam's inhibitive dispositions appear to keep him from moving past the *detect* step in terms of using his prior knowledge. In addition, Sam's dispositions seemed to prohibit him from applying *new* knowledge that he was exposed to in college as well:

> Me: Did you get or did you use feedback from your teachers in your college classes on your writing?
>
> S: Yeah, but it sucks because she would hand out all the papers and I...or before she would hand them out she would explain like the things that people left out or...got wrong and I wouldn't really pay attention because I would be talking to my friend about...football.

Sam seemed uninterested in or unable to self-regulate his learning, including paying attention in class, which he pointed out was a problem for him throughout our interviews.

At the time of the interview in the following excerpt, Sam had been put on academic probation because he did not do well (in terms of grades) during his first semester of college. He was still deciding whether or not he wanted to continue at his particular university. In this excerpt, we discuss some of his struggles with motivation to study and complete his work in college courses. This example points to the idea that even if Sam did *detect* prior knowledge when he received and engaged a learning task during his first semester, for various reasons, he did not *elect* to pursue these connections. Sam described his low self-efficacy as an academic writer in previous interviews to this

excerpt, which may have been detrimental to Sam's efforts to *detect* prior knowledge. Other inhibitive dispositions, including a poor ability to self-regulate his learning, prevented him from moving from *elect* to connect.

> Me: Last time we talked you knew that you weren't doing well in some of your classes. You talked about how you weren't really motivated to do work when you got home from school. Did that change at all at the end of the semester?
>
> S: Sort of. A little bit. I wouldn't really go over to my cousin's house anymore, but I still wouldn't really do my homework.
>
> Me: So what do you think was going on?
>
> S: I was just lazy. I really wouldn't want to do any of my work.

This brief exchange provides additional insight into Sam's dispositions toward learning, as reported in Finding 1. His inhibitive dispositions may have deeper personal and emotional roots that are not explored in this study. Sam's *lack* of willingness to explore connections to prior knowledge blocked him from both *detection* and *election.* Later in this same interview, we talked about his grades in his first year writing classes. He had two writing-focused classes in his first year of college. In this exchange, he begins by talking about his grade in English, but then speaks of an essay from *another* writing focused class that affected his grade there:

> S: In English I got a C, a really low C.
>
> Me: Why do you think that is?
>
> S: My essays. The one in University class on cigarettes—I thought that one was really good, but it turned out I got a C.
>
> Me: What did you understand about why it was evaluated that way?
>
> S: I was supposed to bring out the sides, two sides, like the positive side and the negative side, and I ended up focusing on the negative. I didn't go into enough depth.

Me: What were your habits like in that course?

S: I was missing reflections. We had to write them every week. I guess I didn't do them that well. Or I didn't use quotes. Because you had to write in response to them every week…

Me: Did you do that work?

S: I did most of it, but I half-assed it.

Sam's articulated *lack* of prior knowledge combined with low self-efficacy and low self-regulation left him unable or unwilling to develop as a writer in college. When I asked him "Do you think you just need more practice?" Sam replied, "I guess I didn't really practice that much. Or when the teacher would show us how to do it, I wouldn't really pay attention. There were some things I would catch, but then, I would just continue writing the way I would write." Unlike David, Sam was not conscious of an "arsenal" of writing tools that he might have drawn from.

*Finding 2/ Telling Case 3: Julian*

*Abstracting prior knowledge and "letting go" of former structures.*

Julian *detected* prior writing process knowledge, in particular the composing practices outlined in the Toulmin model, which he learned in high school. Julian *elected* to use this knowledge, but as a repurposing of it rather than as a direct application of it:

Me: Can you think of anything you used in high school writing across college?

Julian: Like the Toulmin model, so that's what I was coming in with. I used it to structure the essay, like an outline. I used it and then wrote around it. I used it to get quotes and support my quotes and to structure my intro. But when I went to write, I started to add more thinking. In high school, I was just straight to the point. I added more explanation. It was different. I let go of the model a little bit and followed my instincts. It's still hard for me to write what I think, though.

While Julian reported low self-efficacy in writing, reflected in his statement that it was still hard for him to "write what I think," he was able to *detect* prior writing knowledge and he *elected* to abstract this knowledge in a way that fit the context for the writing assignment. In this particular example, Julian used his prior knowledge of the Toulmin model to help him complete an assignment in his first year writing class. In other exchanges during our interviews, when Julian discussed this class, he pointed out the expectations that the instructor had for writing:

> J: ….he told us with high school that you learn the five-paragraph essay. He went crazy, he's like, "That's wrong! That's just for exams." He took us away from that kind of thinking, where even a paragraph could be one sentence. He told us to "write the way you see." It was pretty weird the way he taught, but I liked it.

In looking to meet the instructor's expectations, Julian added "more thinking" and "more information" as he "let go of the [Toulmin] model." Furthermore, he was aware that he was *not* supposed to apply any prior knowledge of a five-paragraph structure. In one sense, it could have been a risk for Julian to use his knowledge of the Toulmin model to complete assignments in this class, since this model is built around a five-paragraph structure. However, Julian *elected* to pursue the parts of the model that would help him integrate and explain quoted material, which helped him move toward writing and explaining "more."

As I reported earlier, Julian also had a mix of facilitative and inhibitive dispositions, though, overall, he was motivated to achieve at high levels. Julian reported that he "liked" the way his writing instructor taught writing, though he found it "weird," and due to his enjoyment of the instructor—if not the subject itself—he may have been additionally motivated to employ some of the new learning practices and approaches to

writing that the teacher suggested, including to "write the way you see." (I talk more about the positioning of the instructor in relation to these participants' dispositions and writing transfer in Finding 3.) In terms of this data point from Julian, he uses his prior writing process knowledge (the composing practices outlined in the Toulmin model), but uses it in such a way that he "lets go" of the model. He continued to *elect* to pursue this particular prior writing knowledge for other writing tasks in college as well. In this exchange, Julian describes a writing assignment:

> Me: So in an earlier conversation you said you used Toulmin model as a planning and drafting tool in your writing—was that used here as well for Philosophy?
>
> J: Yeah, for thinking about the essay. For me it beats writing a web. If I just use the model for explaining quotes, it's easier for me to just use that and write around it.

For David and Julian, the social contexts for writing influenced aspects of whether or not they would use particular prior writing knowledge. For Sam, the social and contextual expectations of the classroom appeared to be either less evident to him in his (perhaps unmotivated) attempts to complete school work or he placed values on different things than school work.

These deeper discussions of David's, Sam's, and Julian's *election* to use prior writing process knowledge (or not) give dimension to the finding across the participant group that writing process knowledge was the most often *detected* type of prior writing knowledge, but also help reveal the importance of the social contexts in which each writing task—and participant—was situated. David pulls writing knowledge from his "arsenal" as he needs it; Julian applies—but also "lets' go" of—a particular model of writing. Findings 1 and 2 described data that showed how *detect* and *elect* worked in relationship to facilitative or inhibitive dispositions for participants, but these findings

also hinted at the ways that the social contexts for writing were a powerful factor in terms of how prior knowledge was *detected* or *elected* as part of writing transfer. The importance of the social contexts for writing in terms of how the *detect-elect-connect-enculturation* transfer process occurred for these learners (or not) is explored more deeply in Finding 3.

*Finding 3: Expectancy value, attributions, and enculturation in relationship to D-E-C*

Finally, data analysis revealed that, while participants demonstrated a general and larger awareness regarding the importance and value of their college attendance, their willingness to practice similar attitudes to the community in which their learning occurred was elicited differently and in direct response to the different classroom and instructional contexts in which they participated. Participants shifted their values about or goals in relationship to tasks or contexts to integrate their perceptions of the importance of tasks or contexts in relationship to their overall learning and/or writing development. This shift in values or goals was particularly apparent in their perceptions about instructors or instruction. Additionally, when participants ascribed a high or important value to a task or learning context, they tended to attribute their degree of success in completing the task to their *own* knowledge or efforts. When they ascribed a low or less important value to a task or a context, they tended to attribute their degree of success to *both* their own knowledge or efforts *and* to the learning context, instructor or task. Finally, this finding describes the ways that participants' sensitivity to local learning contexts, and in particular to teaching styles, appeared to *amplify* or *diminish* their facilitative or inhibitive dispositions.

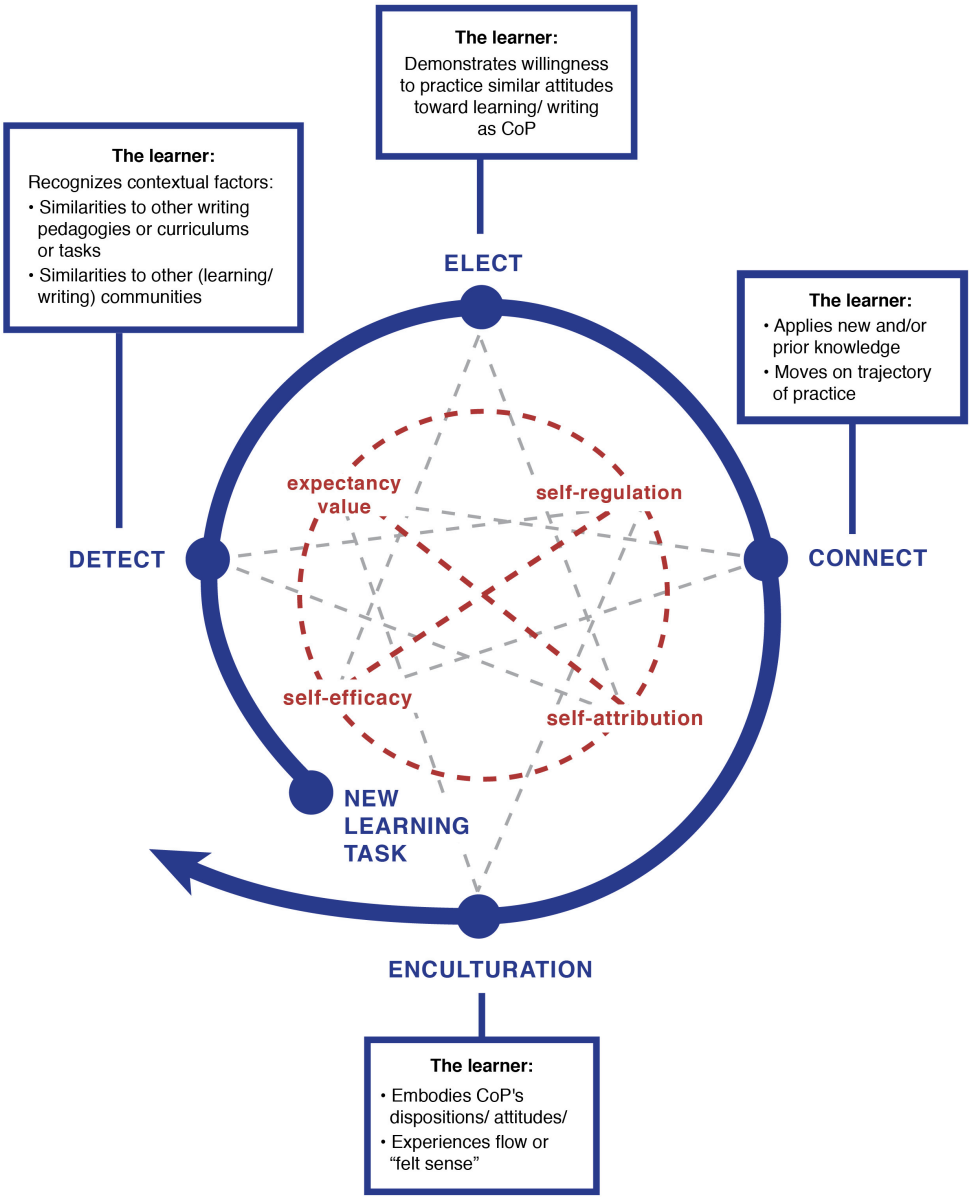
The coding of the data revealed patterns and trends that illuminate answers to the following questions:

- How are learning dispositions elicited by local or specific writing situations and in what ways are these learning dispositions part of participants' habits of dispositional response?
- What is the perceived impact of specific post-secondary learning contexts on these learners' dispositions?

*Trends across the participant group:* Participants' more tacit awareness of other types of writing knowledge besides writing process knowledge, including having a general understanding of the discourse communities in which they were participating was *not* something they articulated in our interviews. Nevertheless, overall some of them did express goals for writing that pointed to a basic rhetorical awareness, such as "writing for a grade." For those with facilitative dispositions, they were able to achieve this purpose. Beyond writing for a grade, however, participants' goals for writing also correlated with the types of values they placed on individual writing assignments and both the larger and smaller contexts for their learning, such as ascribing a high value to writing that would support development toward a particular career or ascribing a low value to writing assigned in a class where the instructor did not know a participant's name. In this way, participants' awareness of learning contexts enacted their values in different ways. The values they each ascribed to contexts and tasks included what they perceived about community values and practices, whether or not they *detected* similarities to previous learning contexts, and whether or not they *elected* to pursue similar attitudes toward writing and learning as those they *detected* in the current context.

*Differences in overarching values versus localized values:* In terms of the larger college context, every participant except for Andrew (6/7) expressed an overarching goal for attending college. While articulating goals for learning was coded under *self-regulation* in this study, the goals that participants had were directly related to their—or, more specifically, their family's—values about learning and education. On the conceptual model, I have indicated that *expectancy value,* as a belief construct where a learner's beliefs concerning the degree to which a task is worthy of pursuit informs decision-taking in response to it, occurs between the steps of *detect* and *elect.*

This placement is purposeful in that it illuminates the idea that the act of *electing* concerns a conscious *willingness* on the part of the learner to apply prior or new knowledge to the writing task, but also a conscious *willingness* to practice similar attitudes to the community in which their learning occurs. For these participants, on one hand, their willingness concerned larger cultural constructs regarding the importance and value of attending college. On the other, this willingness was elicited in direct response to the different classroom and instructional contexts in which participants participated.




Andrew was the only student who reported that he was not certain that he valued college and, at the end of our series of interviews, was not sure he would continue. Of those six who did have an overarching goal for attending college, five participants shared that they valued going to school because of their family: "Coming from where I live, a low-income family, I want to help my family out. Every time I think of that, I think, I gotta

work harder," said Julian. "My mom didn't graduate from high school," said Janice. "I'm going to do well in college to make her proud of me." And Lily said that her biggest influence in her life was her family. "They are the reason I come to college," she said. In this way participants ascribed strong value to the college learning context and indicated that going to college was worthy of pursuit.

But within the specific writing and learning contexts in which they participated—their college courses where they had to complete writing tasks—participants shifted these values a bit to integrate more individually-designed goals or values related to either the task itself or the specific context, particularly when it came to instruction. For example, Lily had to write a lesson plan for a class she took called Community Engagement. In this class, she worked with three- and four-year olds at a local pre-school. Lily had a future goal to become a teacher, and so she placed a positive value on this task. Andrew, on the other hand, who showed inhibitive dispositions, wanted to study kinesiology and felt that writing did not really matter in moving toward that goal. "I'll do writing for my G.E. classes, but that's it," he said.

Such perceptions seemed to impact conscious and/or strategic *electing* (or not) to apply prior knowledge to the specific tasks that students encountered. Janice, who had unclear career goals, but did ascribe a value to attending college connected to her family's values, for example, reported using a practice learned in high school—categorizing her annotations in a book she read for a college-level writing class—to inform her response to an essay prompt for the class. "I gotta get good grades, so I'm gonna use all the things I know help me write for this class," she said.

In addition to ascribing values to tasks as related to their learning goals, participants

also ascribed value to the contexts for writing. Soren, who was a high achiever with facilitative dispositions, felt annoyed by the way his college writing instructor taught the class. In our first interview during college, when I asked him to describe his writing course, he said: "I'm unsure of this class. The teacher tends to ignore kids who don't pay attention and they're like a big distraction. I'm trying to learn, but I don't really understand her assignments. We are supposed to be reading a book and we haven't once yet talked about it." In a later interview, he said, "I stopped reading the book because we never talked about it. I wrote my essay for it without even reading it. I don't really know if I learned anything new in that class." Soren indicated that he had a disposition oriented toward learning ("I'm trying to learn…"), but that the learning context (students not paying attention and a teacher who ignores these students) and a contextual practice (*not* discussing the assigned reading) led him to devalue the writing task associated with the book. This example points to an interesting trend in the data where participants with facilitative dispositions ascribed particular values to writing tasks that were dependent upon the contexts for learning and to the quality of teaching in particular. While their larger values toward learning did not change (college-going as associated with a family value), and while they still used facilitative dispositions to complete tasks in a way that satisfied their movement toward larger goals, such as college graduation or career, the ways in which these students valued particular writing tasks was affected within specific learning contexts.

In consideration of the previously described trend, where participants showed sensitivity to their local learning contexts, and in particular a sensitivity to teaching styles, their dispositions appeared to *amplify* or *diminish*. That is, in cases where

participants had high self-efficacy or self-regulation, these dispositions were "turned up"—or amplified—because of good teaching, interesting content, or both. High self-efficacy and self-regulation was especially evident in the courses students reported enjoying. Their satisfaction in their learning in these courses also seemed amplified, or highlighted as more satisfying than other courses where they were less engaged. The reverse is also true: where the teaching or subject was less interesting to the participant, their dispositions were diminished. Participants with *high* self-efficacy in writing who encountered a teacher or content that they did not enjoy ascribed less value to these courses, were less likely to self-regulate their learning in them, and often attributed this lack of self-regulation *to* the teacher, rather than to their own efforts. Participants with *low* self-efficacy who encountered a teacher or content they did not enjoy reported especially low self-regulation in terms of completing work in these courses and attributed this lack of self-regulation to their own lack of effort.

*Attributions:* Ascribing a value to a task also worked in relationship to participants' attributions for their degree of success. Attributions can be either internal—or related to one's own effort, knowledge, or skills, or external—that is, related to a force or factor outside of one's immediate control (Erten and Burden, 2014). For participants in this study, when the value they placed on the task or the learning context was high or important, they tended to attribute their degree of success in completing the task to their own knowledge or efforts. When the value ascribed to a task or a context was low or less important, they tended to attribute their degree of success to *both* their own knowledge or efforts *and* to the learning context or the task. Janice, for example, had to write three short papers in her art history course, which concentrated on images of women and

women artists. She reported that she felt "excited" to go to this class, because her teacher had "great energy and gives great lectures." Janice was surprised by how much she enjoyed the content and attributed this *enjoyment* to her instructor, However, she attributed her final course grade to her own efforts. In fact, she emailed drafts of two of her papers for this course to me for feedback, indicating Janice's facilitative dispositions (though she reported that she did *not* enjoy writing for school). In this way, her dispositions were *amplified* by her excitement about the course and the instructor. Yet when I asked her to reflect on her performance in this class, she said, "I did pretty well, because I worked so hard on all of those papers." Her attribution for her performance was internally oriented. Soren, on the other hand, reported that he received an 82% on his essay related to the course reading in his college writing class. He was disappointed in this grade, but while he attributed this score to the fact that he "stopped reading" the course text, he also attributed it to the teacher, who "never discussed" the book in class and who, he said, seemed disorganized and lacked classroom management skills.

*Finding 3/ Telling Case 1: David*

*David's Sensitivity to Contexts for Learning and Writing*

David's sensitivity to learning and task contexts—which directed whether or not he wanted to attend particular classes or not, and which helped him to know when to use particular strategies for writing did not affect whether or not he pursued particular goals. He wanted to do well in all of his courses, but he pursued achievement in different ways in response to each learning context.

Me: So you participate in classes and talk to your professors.

D: Yeah…for the two classes that I attend. The professor knows my name in those classes. Those are smaller but I'm really engaged because those are the classes that really interest me. My AP English class gave me a bar, to see how hard I have to work in comparison to these other classes. Because I know I actually had to work in her class and I ended up getting a B. How hard I had to work there allows me to see how hard I have to work here, kinda gauge…

Me: Right, so it feels like you're shaping your attitude around your college classes based on what you can get out of them. That's why you don't go to business class? Is that accurate?

D: Well, I've always been one to figure out what I can and can't do and I feel like that's something I can do, I can miss class because in the end whatever is being taught in class is what's on the quiz, and I'm taking those and getting As.

Me: What about teaching approaches? Are you finding that the way your instructors teach in college is the same as what you were used to in high school?

D: Yeah. They're really like "I don't care." But I expected it so…well it's not like they all don't care. Because actually my English professor was really flexible. He seemed passionate in what he taught. And the critical thinking teacher, he was understanding too, but he was more strict. And the other teachers seem like they don't care. They're interested in the topic, but their way is the right way, so the students…They're lecturing and no one understands it and…it doesn't matter.

In this excerpt, David *detected* a similarity between the rigorous expectations of his 12th grade AP Literature class and the two courses that he said he chose to "attend." These college courses required him to "work hard," as he said he had to do in AP Lit, where he didn't obtain an A grade. He "gauged" expectations across these contexts. He also described that he was "interested" and "engaged" in these courses and that, while they were smaller, the teachers in them knew his name. His perceptions of two other class contexts were quite different. He reported that he was able to suss out expectations for the class that, to him, indicated he did not need to attend class in order to do well. He did not value attending class because, as he perceived, the teachers did not "care," and did not clarify or check with students even though "no one understands" the lecture. It's

implied here that David *elected* to apply behaviors toward these classes—basically in choosing not to attend them—from previous contexts where he had learned to "figure out what I can do and what I can't do." In this example, the integration of all of the elements of the conceptual model is particularly clear: David's facilitative dispositions, where he assessed the *contexts* for his learning in relation to his confidence and values, also functioned as *detections* to similar or dissimilar prior learning contexts. He used these *detections* in order to determine how he *elected* to participate within them, including determining how course expectations matched up with his values.

Ascribing a value to the task or context was part of how David approached them. In applying particular values to his learning contexts and tasks, David was able to set task-focused goals (a self-regulatory behavior) in terms of these values. However, he also manipulated his approach to achieving these goals in response to the values he ascribed to tasks or contexts. During an interview when David was in high school, for example, we had the following exchange:

> Me: So over the course of your high school career, have you been happy with your grades or the teaching in your English classes?
>
> D: No
>
> Me: Why not?
>
> D: Um, I feel like a lot of high school stuff is very, like, what's that word? Busy work.
>
> Me: Mmhm.
>
> D: It's a lot of busy work and I don't like busy work. Like, if you're gonna give me work where I need to produce quality and, like an essay, then maybe I'll like it. But if you're gonna make me do all this other stuff, then I tend not to care…

In high school, David devalued what he perceived as "busy work," which he did not

enjoy and which he didn't consider "quality" learning. Writing, on the other hand, was something that he considered "quality" work. These types of assessments about what he considered "quality" or "busywork" assignments transferred over to his first year of college in terms of how he assessed and *detected* similarities to previous contexts. Across the high school to college transition, this was coded in terms of "wasting time." In effect, in both high school and college, David was particularly sensitive to teaching and classroom contexts that, he felt, wasted his time. In the following two excerpts, we were talking first about his Business 100 course, then about Asian American Studies:

> Me: So you said you have a high grade in that class, overall [Business 100]. How are you feeling about that class?
>
> D: I feel like the teacher is getting paid to do nothing.
>
> Me: Really?
>
> D: He goes over what we read in class and stuff. I don't know. A lot of it is wasting our time. So I tend not to go to that class.
>
> Me: And you're still getting a high grade?
>
> D: Yeah.

Here, we talked about Asian American Studies:

> Me: How's that class going?
>
> D: Um, that class is really boring.
>
> Me: What's boring about it?
>
> D: The professors are so…like, they digress from the topic so so much. Like he goes on a tangent about something like that has nothing to do with it at all. Oh my god. So…I tend not to go to that class as well.
>
> Me: Okay. So…Here is what I'm hearing from you right now. "I don't want to sit in this class that is wasting my time and not helping me do well—and I think I can still do well in the class without having to go." Is that right?

D: Cuz those are the classes where I have the highest grades.

Despite his disdain for the teaching in each of these courses, David still had his eye on the prize—he wanted high grades in these courses. David's high self-efficacy and his ability to self-regulate his learning in these courses, despite the fact that he didn't often attend them, facilitated his movement to *enculturation* in the contexts where he did and didn't attend class. What is disheartening here is *how* he felt he is *enculturated* into the particular disciplinary contexts where he felt that his time was wasted. He perceived or interpreted underlying norms in each of these course contexts and ascribed value to them in relation to his learning goals. While he still did well in the courses that he chose not to attend, his satisfaction in his learning was diminished. He didn't value the work he did for these classes, for the most part, though he did complete it. His satisfaction in learning for these two courses was mediated and perhaps limited by his disposition toward the context. David's high self-efficacy might have been almost too high—he was so confident that he would do well, that he chose not to attend class at all. We do not know for sure whether or not he missed important content in these courses, though he did receive As in both of them. His high confidence, however, was balanced by the way he rationalized his attendance for the classes he *did* attend. In these courses, he said he had to work hard to succeed. The teachers knew his name. It is interesting that in both of these courses—English and Critical Thinking—he received grades that he was not satisfied with.

*David's attributions*: Assigning an attribution, or rationalization for one's own success or failure, was something that David did in overt ways when he felt success or satisfaction with his learning, but in more subtle ways when he felt less successful. A B

grade for David—as he received in his college English class—was a type of failure, because he wanted only As—and his high self-efficacy led him to believe he was capable of receiving these As. When he received a high grade, it was because of his own effort or knowledge applications, but when he received a B, he hinted that this grade was undeserved and he attributed this as a fault of the professor's at first, then later admitted that he needed to gain more knowledge as a writer:

> Me: In English class you got feedback on your drafts—what did you learn from that feedback?
>
> D: A lot of the feedback said stuff about my grammar and I always thought that my grammar was like a strong point, but apparently not, so…
>
> Me: Anything else besides grammar that you saw in the feedback you received?
>
> D: Really it seemed like a lot of nitpicking stuff. That's one thing that bothered me. It was never really the content of what I was writing, it was like: this isn't really the right word choice…or things like that. And I was like, really? This is what I get docked points for?
>
> Me: But your grades were overall quite high.
>
> D: Yeah, but I'm still waiting for the…the whole package in writing. I thought it would be here by now. And it's still not here.
>
> Me: Do you have any sense of how to get there?
>
> D: I think honestly just continuing to write.

David indicated his annoyance at his English teacher's feedback and attributed his lower grade to the instructor's "nitpicking," but he also reported that he liked the class and the instructor. He questioned the instructor's decision to dock points for writing process knowledge gaps such as grammar and rhetorical knowledge gaps such as word choice. But it is this feedback, perhaps, that also led him to attribute his degree of success as a writer (which was not as high as he would have liked it to be) to the idea that he had not

yet obtained "the whole package in writing." He knew that "just continuing to write" would be one way to address his writing gaps. Here again, we can see the conceptual model in action. *Attribution*, which falls on the spiral *after* the *connect* step, feeds back into dispositions such as self-efficacy and self-regulation during subsequent transfer opportunities. While David's attributions for his success in this example were both external (his teacher's "nitpicking") and internal (he doesn't yet have "the whole package in writing"), his high self-regulation and self-efficacy pushed him to want to continue to write in order to fill his knowledge gaps—and he carried these dispositions across various learning contexts, enacting them differently in each. .

Finding 3/ Telling Case 2: Sam

*Conflicted values, conflicting attributions, and non-academic contexts*: When discussing the first two findings in relation to data from interviews with Sam, I focused on how Sam's low self-efficacy and poor self-regulation led him to fail to find ways to successfully detect prior knowledge and elect to pursue it in his writing assignments. Another feature of these excerpts is his lack of ability to recognize, or *detect,* the disposition or *habitus* of his classroom communities, including understanding the expectations for how to move on a trajectory toward increasing writing expertise. As I've discussed earlier, *habitus* is the set of dispositions in a group *or* individual that orient behaviors of the group or individual. The degree of similarity or difference between the group habitus and the individual habitus informs transfer. For example, Sam initially thought he did well on his essay on cigarettes, but ultimately received a C and called this essay "terrible" after it had been submitted, graded and returned to him. In retrospect, he

understood that the C grade might have been because he "didn't go into enough depth," but he was not entirely sure. When I asked him about help-seeking behaviors, such as going to a professor's office hours, he indicated that he did not do so, except once, when his English teacher required him to. During this one-on-one conference, Sam reported that the teacher "just said that the essay was not right and I'm not addressing the prompt or whatever. I had to redo my essay on the last day of school as part of my final grade. I thought I was doing good until the last day of school and she made me do it over." While Sam's semester grades were a clear indicator that Sam struggled in college, phrases like "I thought I was doing good" and "She made me do it over" from Sam indicated that his dispositions toward learning were inhibiting his learning process, but also that he was *not* sensitive to learning contexts, including instructor and task expectations, since he was often confused about the rationale for the grades he received.

A particularly inhibitive disposition for Sam was *attribution* since the reason for his lack of success was due to his own lack of effort and his reflection on his own lack of effort spiraled back to low self-regulatory behaviors and low self-efficacy. Like David, when his performance on a task was less successful than he would have liked, Sam attributed this lack of success to both internal and external factors. However, unlike David, Sam did *not* attribute his lack of success to his classroom contexts, teachers or instruction. In fact, when I pushed him to articulate reasons for why his learning performances were not successful, he admitted that he liked all of his teachers and found his classes interesting. Sam admitted various times that he was "lazy," which can be described as an internal inhibitive effort attribution. He reported in more than one interview that he went to his cousin's house in the evenings or on weekends rather than

studying. He also said that he did not pay attention in class. But, as an external attribution, in other parts of our conversations, Sam blamed the commute to and from school as preventing him from completing work and said that if he didn't have to drive one hour each way, he would have done better in school. David's low self-efficacy and low self-regulatory behaviors fed into these attributions.

Sam may have also been looking for a different type of community to participate in rather than an academic one. In balance to his reports of failing to complete his schoolwork or receiving low grades on his assignments, he reported that he "loved" college six times across our interviews. In our final interview of the series, he talked about playing pool on campus during his breaks between classes and some of the friends he had made:

Me: How's it going in school?

Sam: I like college. The friends.

Me: Is that what you like most about college, the social aspect of it?

S: Yeah, I made some good friends. We would hang out all the time.

Me: But you're also in college to…

S: To learn.

Since we can call Sam a novice as a college student in all of its characteristics, including social, we can also say that Sam chose a trajectory of learning that was more social—that of joining the group of college kids who played pool between classes. Sam achieved a different type of enculturation into the campus community; he found a place on campus where he enjoyed the people and the context. Yet what he valued about this context may be connected to his inhibitive dispositions. Playing pool was a way to avoid the type of

academic work in which he had low self-efficacy.

*Conclusion: Integrating these findings*

In sum, what can be said about these participants and their dispositions in relationship to the writing tasks they encountered from high school to college? Clearly, there were some differences among these participants, but there were also particular *habits* of dispositional response that were elicited by the local and specific academic writing situations in which they—willingly or unwillingly—learned and wrote. The conceptual model I have proposed for understanding how dispositions work in relationship to a *D-E-C-Enculturation* view of transfer shows how contexts for learning and individual agency and dispositions worked in these instances to facilitate or prevent transfer of prior knowledge or application of new knowledge. Therefore, these elements are highly integrated. As I will argue in the Discussion chapter, dispositions cannot be separated from the transfer phenomenon, just as contexts for learning cannot be ignored when seeking to understand it. However, in looking more closely at the components in the model, these findings provide a way to understand the nuances involved in how or whether transfer as a *D-E-C-Enculturation* process occurs for these learners.

First, *self-efficacy* is a powerful disposition that works as an antecedent to other dispositions and which oriented these learners—in positive and negative ways—to the writing tasks they encountered. Self-efficacy also moves flexibly across the steps of *D-E-C-Enculturation* and harmonizes with other dispositions to facilitate awareness of learning across new and former contexts and tasks. However, for these participants, it was predominantly reported in relation to the step of *detect.* David, for example, used his

high self-efficacy and, subsequently, his high self-regulation to manage particular college courses in a way that he deemed appropriate, including, in one case, rarely attending class.

Self-efficacy featured prominently to facilitate or inhibit participants' approach to writing tasks, including whether they *detected* prior knowledge. They were also consistent in their perceptions of their self-efficacy in interview conversations as they moved across the high school to college interviews transition. Participants with high self-efficacy described their confidence as writers, which allowed them to detect and assess similarities—and dissimilarities—between college-level writing tasks and contexts and previous writing tasks and contexts. Additionally, participants with high self-efficacy led to motivation to *elect,* or pursue connections (or not) to prior knowledge as they took on new writing tasks in college. The two participants with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, often stalled out at the *elect* step. This was the case for Sam, whose low self-efficacy in writing appeared to inhibit his *detection* of prior knowledge and instead, as he said, "I just write the way I write." Even when Sam *detected* a connection to his prior knowledge, such as his practices as a creative writer, his low confidence prevented him for even assessing whether there were approaches he might modify or use as an academic writer.

Second, the *types* of prior writing knowledge that participants *detected* and *elected* to pursue when they were engaged in a writing task were predominantly composing processes as part of their writing process knowledge. For participants with facilitative dispositions, the *detection* and *election* to pursue prior knowledge worked in relationship with high self-efficacy and self-regulation. While participants like Julian reported low

self-efficacy in writing, their high self-efficacy in general learning also facilitated their *detection* and *election* in terms of prior writing knowledge. In the process of successfully *detecting* prior writing knowledge and *electing* to pursue connections to it, these learners engaged a disposition of strong self-efficacy as they assessed similarities—but also and primarily *dissimilarities*-- between college writing tasks and practices and former tasks and practices. Writing process knowledge and genre knowledge featured prominently as the type of writing knowledge most often *detected* and *elected* in terms of writing transfer across the high school to college transition. There were very few to no instances of rhetorical, subject matter, and discourse community knowledge. This absence in the data points both to the knowledge that participants consciously *detected* and *elected* to use, but also to potential gaps in their prior knowledge.

Third, perceptions about participants' success and failure in *connecting* provided insight into their experiences of *enculturation* into the learning contexts in which they were participants. In considering the data that revealed students' perceptions regarding the *expectancy value* of and *attributions* ascribed to their learning tasks and contexts, we can begin to see the ways in which these dispositions related to their writing—and academic—development, but also the way that these dispositions were bound up in the contexts in which they participated. For example, David avoided attending classes where the instruction was, as he reported, a "waste of his time." He did not value the instruction in these two courses and adjusted his overarching and high value of attending college to these contexts. In a different example, Soren ascribed a high value to the *content* of his first year writing course, but a low value to instructional practices. When Soren did not do as well as expected on an essay assignment, he *attributed* that lower grade, in part, to

poor instruction.

These findings support my view that transfer occurs—or does not—in relationship to an engagement of learners' dispositions. Furthermore, while dispositions were carried by these participants into and out of their high school and college learning contexts, they were either *amplified* or diminished by these contexts, particularly in relation to the way they valued tasks or instruction. The conceptual model and the findings in this study show a larger picture of learning for these participants—one that includes dispositions as predictive of learners' processes of *detecting* prior knowledge and of their decision-making in *electing* to pursue such knowledge as part of writing transfer, but also how different contexts for learning elicit enactments of their dispositions in different ways.

# Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

*"I feel confident most of the time."*—David, First Year College Student

This study looked at the relationships between situated contexts for writing, the prior knowledge that writers reported in response to transfer opportunities, and the individual agency that learners brought to transfer through their dispositions. The conceptual model provided a lens for considering these relationships. This model, which draws upon four categories of dispositions proposed by Driscoll and Wells (2012), theoretical concepts of situated learning and Bourdieu's *habitus*, and Perkins and Salomon's (2012) *detect-elect-connect* (D-E-C) view of transfer allowed me to examine how learners approached and experienced transfer opportunities across contexts for writing and the high school to college transition. The stability of the D-E-C framework enabled me to investigate the more flexible nature of dispositions and the ways that dispositions were shaped and reshaped by particular contexts.

Findings across the participant grouped showed that subjects' processes in *detecting* connections to prior knowledge worked in relationship to their degree of self-efficacy in either learning or writing. Self-efficacy was a crucial disposition for these learners as they moved across the high school to college transition. Participants with high self-efficacy in learning and writing *detected* connections to their prior knowledge, were able to evaluate whether or not to *elect* to pursue these connections, and their high self-efficacy initiated and mirrored other facilitative dispositions. While facilitative dispositions moved some learners forward over the "bridges" of *detect* and *elect*, other

participants' inhibitive dispositions impeded the crossing of the *detect* and *elect* bridges. In this study, movement (or lack of movement) across *detect* and *elect* suggests that the process of transfer involves more than the single act of transferring and/or transforming prior knowledge across contexts. In taking a broader view of transfer through a *D-E-C-Enculturation* perspective, this study reveals how transfer is highly bound up with dispositions, particularly self-efficacy, and how dispositions interact with a *detection* of prior knowledge and a decision-making *election* of whether or not to transfer and/or transform prior knowledge in the new context.

Findings showed that participants with facilitative dispositions regularly *detected* particular types of writing knowledge when engaging new and unfamiliar writing tasks. For example, participants often detected knowledge of prior genres, but used only parts of these genres or evaluated them as altogether inappropriate to apply in new contexts. They acknowledged that some of their prior genre knowledge was *not* useful and they used their high self-efficacy to adapt or abandon it. This finding underscores that decision-making is part of writing transfer, where learners *elect* whether or not and how to pursue prior knowledge. Self-efficacy and other dispositions impact how such decision-making took place for subjects in this study.

Findings also showed the different ways that participants' dispositions responded dynamically, as *amplified* or *diminished,* to attune to specific contexts. Such attunement led to different degrees of participants' participation and *enculturation* into contexts and/or disciplinary knowledge and practices. For example, participants were particularly sensitive to "good" or "bad" teaching and were able to recognize and identify these qualities in instructors by *detecting* similarities to and differences from previous contexts.

Participants in this study *attuned* their dispositions to the new contexts, which caused them to participate in them in different ways. In particular, they described *diminished* facilitative dispositions in the contexts where they perceived "bad" teaching and/or disengaged peers, and they described less self-regulation in working toward success in these contexts. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* helps to illuminate such attunement, as it embodies the dispositions and attitudes that individuals bring to experience, and it predicts the ways that individuals orient and respond to contexts. However, contexts—or *fields*—also inhabit dispositions, as Wardle has argued via Bourdieu (2012). Participants in this study *attuned* their individual dispositions and participation to the qualities, dispositions, and behaviors they perceived and observed in the learning contexts in which they participated. In this study, such attunement resulted in individual habitus that shifted in response to context, indicating that the behaviors and beliefs of individuals were highly sensitive to the specificities of contexts.

Overall, these findings illuminate that transfer is an incredibly complex phenomenon; for the subjects in this study, it was a process that included their dispositional orientations to learning within situated contexts for learning—and these dispositions were sensitive and adjusted to contexts. Further examinations of how dispositions and knowledge transfer integrate across contexts can help to expand current understandings of the phenomenon of transfer as researchers continue to consider what writers do and how they do it. Scholarship on writing transfer has not yet fully explored how or whether dispositions facilitate or impede transfer opportunities, but there have been calls to address this research gap in empirical ways (Bereiter, 1995; Nowacek, 2011; Driscoll and Wells, 2012; Wardle, 2012). By showing the *D-E-C-Enculturation* conceptual model in

action through the findings in this study, I offer a method for addressing this gap. In this chapter, I interpret several conclusions suggested by the findings and resituate these in the scholarship, particularly those that seem to contribute answers to questions about transfer and dispositions in relationship to transfer. I frame the chapter around these findings, and begin by returning to the detect-elect-connect view of transfer proposed by Perkins and Salomon (2012) which anchored the conceptual model for analysis in this study.

*An Argument for a Detect-Elect-Connect View of Transfer*

Perkins and Salomon's view of *detect-elect-connect* as a framework for understanding transfer is particularly important in this discussion, because it presents an expanded view of transfer. I adopted and added to Perkins' and Salomon's (2012) framework of *detect-elect-connect* (D-E-C) in order to consider which types of dispositions learners displayed at each step in the D-E-C process and how they were displayed.

In this study, participants' self-efficacy helped to initiate or impede their D-E-C-*Enculturation* experiences of transfer. In our interview conversations, self-efficacy was elicited *first* when I asked participants questions about their writing processes or learning practices—including what prior knowledge they *detected.* For the learners in this study, there were intrapersonal, perhaps psychological, orientations to learning demonstrated through the disposition of self-efficacy (or their degree of confidence) toward learning or writing that helped to facilitate the first step of transfer: *detect.* Overall, *detection* of and *election* to pursue connections to prior knowledge *depended* on a high self-efficacy in

either learning or writing. Because participants' degree of self-efficacy in writing or learning prevented or allowed *detection* and *election* to occur, these steps in the transfer process were highly integrated with self-efficacy. Self-efficacy in relationship to *detection* and *election* suggested that the process of transfer included more than the cognitive act of accessing one's prior knowledge; it fact, it was highly bound up with this disposition.

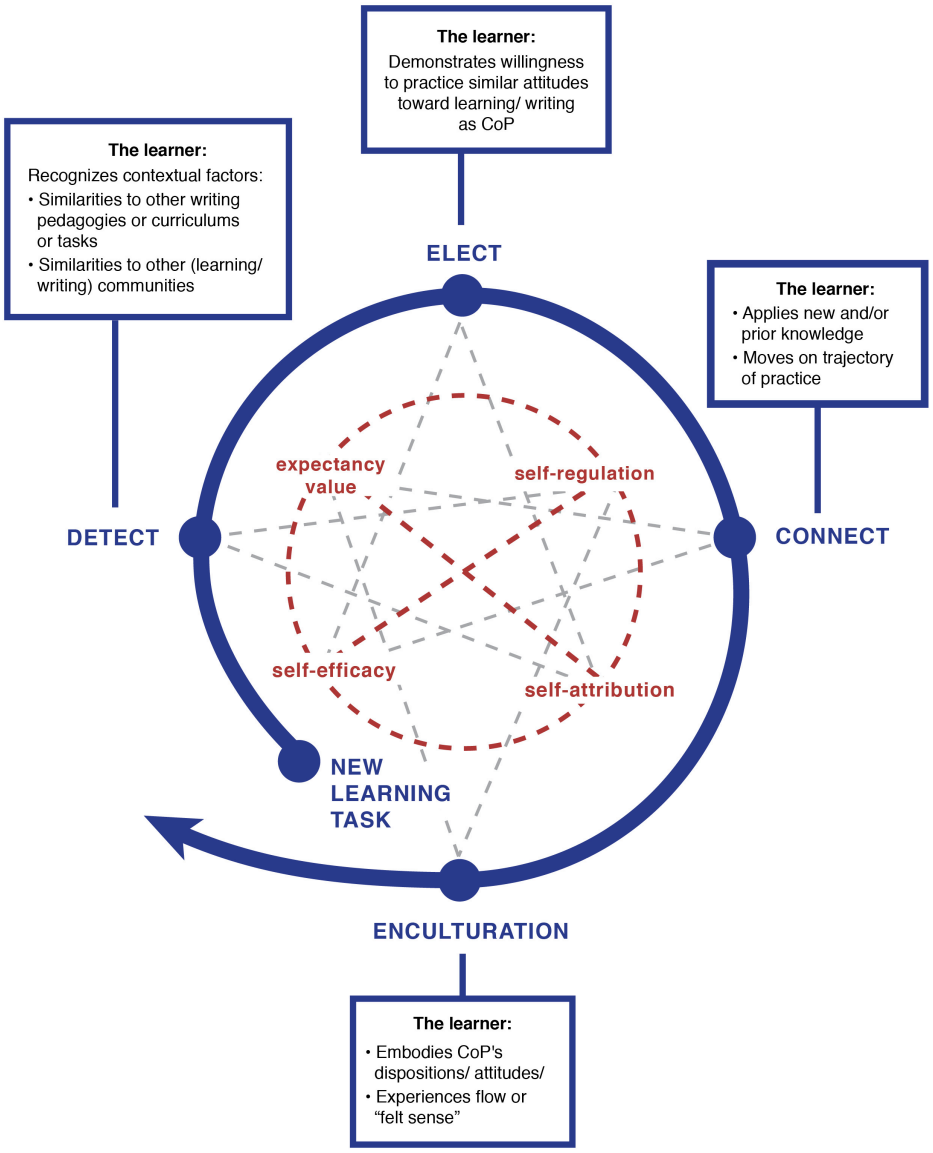
In terms of *detection,* for example, David shared that he accessed his high confidence as a writer whenever he engaged a new writing task but before he *detected* prior writing knowledge. Sam, as a contrastive example, articulated that he did "not like to write" so he preferred to figure out "whatever the teacher wants." In each of these cases, these students' sense of self-efficacy worked in relationship to either facilitating or inhibiting the *detection* of prior knowledge. Perkins and Salomon (2012) describe *detect-elect-connect* as three *bridges* of transfer—and learners must cross the bridge of *detect* first. The dispositional characteristics of learners in this study informed their separate and distinct passages—or not—across these bridges.

This research illustrates Perkins and Salomon's contention that the act of *detection* of prior knowledge and the *election* to pursue this knowledge are important elements of the transfer opportunity. Specifically, findings showed how *detect* and *elect* worked from the actor's—or learner's—perspective in terms of eliciting and applying prior knowledge. Findings also revealed how learners' agencies and dispositions were bound up in the steps of *detect* and *elect* to elicit successful—or unsuccessful—movement toward *connection*. Soren and Lily, for example, both of whom had high self-efficacy as writers, used highly facilitative self-regulatory practices to help them cross the bridges of *detect*

and *elect:* they each evaluated what was useful from their prior knowledge to help them *detect*, and they each monitored their learning and sought help in regard to checking their applications of prior and/or new knowledge when they came to the bridge of *elect*. Sam, on the other hand, who had low self-efficacy and low self-regulation, did not always report *detections* of prior knowledge and, when he did, he did not *elect* to pursue them. Each of these examples illustrate the ways in which these subjects referenced their prior writing knowledge and how self-efficacy facilitated or inhibited the ways that they referenced their knowledge.

In our interviews, when I asked participants to report what came to mind when they were assigned a writing task in high school or college, they referenced types of prior knowledge, but also their degree of confidence in writing and certain self-regulatory practices, sometimes facilitative, sometimes inhibitive. These findings revealed different ways that participants' habits of dispositional response facilitated or preempted whether or not they crossed the *detect* and *elect* bridges. The conceptual model on the following page illustrates how self-efficacy works in relationship to the bridges of *detect* and *elect.*

These findings also point to a broader conclusion that spans the research: transfer itself involves not only what and how prior knowledge is *connected* to the new task in the new context. As these findings show, and as Perkins and Salomon argue, it also involves the ways that learners perceive their prior knowledge—or *detect* its usefulness in the new learning context and in response to the new task—and how they make decisions about or *elect* whether or not to pursue prior or new knowledge as a way to succeed in the new task or context.




The findings here also suggest that there is a fourth step to the D-E-C model that is highly integrated with learners' dispositional responses to tasks and contexts.

*Enculturation* can be described as the moments in the learning process where learners integrate cultural exemplars, behaviors, and knowledge in explicit ways (Tishman, Jay, and Perkins, 1993). When participants in this study were sensitive to the ways writing, knowledge, and community were valued and/or constructed in the specific learning contexts they encountered, their demonstrations of understanding these were particularly evident after they *connected* knowledge (or not). *Enculturation* unfolded—or spiraled—to subsequent learning opportunities and appeared to modify or develop participants' dispositions, a process I have called *amplification* or *diminishment.* Part of how learners were *enculturated* into new contexts involved the ways that they brought information about previous contexts and practices with them into new contexts, or the ways that they *detected* similarities or differences across them. This data suggests that when dispositions are elicited or cultivated in original contexts (such as family or early classroom experiences), they play a role in subsequent transfer opportunities. Thus, while learners in this study carried their individual dispositions *into* and *away from* unique contexts and transfer opportunities, transfer as it occurred in specific communities of practice amplified, reinforced, or diminished particular dispositions of these learners. Since all learners move from task to task and context to context, transfer, then, can be described as a spiraling through which learners transfer writing knowledge, contextual knowledge, and learning dispositions in different ways across contexts and as they move repeatedly through the steps of *detect, elect, connect* and *enculturation.*

Therefore, a full view of transfer includes not only *connection* of prior knowledge to new contexts, but also the acts that precede and follow it: detection, election, and enculturation. Dispositions work in relationship to each of these acts. In discussing each

finding and its implications for learning and teaching, then, I am also arguing for a D-E-C-*Enculturation* view of transfer. I suggest that this conceptualization of transfer is particularly useful in understanding how or whether transfer occurs, especially in relationship to the dispositions that learners describe as they engage opportunities to transfer through these steps. This perspective of transfer includes a framework that can allow researchers and instructors a broader and more comprehensive view of this phenomenon, since it integrates students' dispositions into the act. This perspective indicates that transfer is not only a cognitive process where learners transfer knowledge across contexts; it is also a process that includes dispositional orientations to learning within them.

In their article "Knowledge to Go: A Motivational and Dispositional View of Transfer," Perkins and Salomon critiqued transfer research as focusing primarily on the step of *connect,* that is, what, how, or whether prior knowledge is actually applied in the transfer context. A transfer paradigm has involved studying what is learned *here* and then whether or not it is applied *there* (p. 249). While studying what transfers from situation to situation has revealed understandings about how and whether prior knowledge moves across similar (or not-so-similar) tasks, viewing transfer in this way has limited researchers from understanding the conditions that inform it, including how learner agency interacts with the *detection* of possible links to prior knowledge and the *election* to pursue these links.

*How Facilitative and Inhibitive Dispositions Work in Relationship to D-E-C*

In the conceptual model for this research, I show "three bridges" of transfer: *detect,*

*elect,* and *connect* with the additional bridge of *enculturation.* The habits of response that participants described in relationship to contexts or tasks were organized into a taxonomy of *dispositions: self-efficacy, expectancy value, self-regulation,* and *attribution.*

I drew on Driscoll and Wells' (2012) discussion of these dispositions to define the terms in this taxonomy, but I also turned to educational psychology research that defined and explored connections between dispositions and learning transfer. Lobato's (2003) and Bandura's (1977) research, for example, were regularly cited across this literature as foundational to understanding the ways that dispositions inform an actor-oriented perspective of learning transfer and, specifically, the ways that self-efficacy often elicits other facilitative dispositions. In this section, I emphasize the importance of the self-efficacy in relationship to the D-E-C-*Enculturation* view of transfer. For participants in this study, facilitative dispositions such as high self-efficacy and self-regulation moved them forward over the bridges of *detect* and *elect,* but inhibitive dispositions impeded the crossing of these bridges.

*High self-efficacy and D-E-C*

> "…I like to think of it as having it in my arsenal. Like it's there if I need it but for right now it's not necessary." --David, First-year college student

I have repeated David's comment about his "arsenal," because it speaks to one of the most important insights gained from this study: writing transfer is bound up with the *dispositions* and *agency* that individuals bring to learning and both writing transfer and dispositions are enacted in particular and different ways across contexts for learning. High self-efficacy was a powerful disposition for the subjects in this study. It ignited other facilitative dispositions, especially self-regulation. But because transfer is a

spiraling process where self-regulatory behaviors, including reflection, occur at different points in the process, it can also be argued that high self-regulation feeds back into self-efficacy—and sustains it or improves it.

Data from participants in this study exposed self-efficacy as an important initial and antecedent dispositional orientation to *detection* of prior knowledge. When given a new writing task, before or when concurrently *detecting* connections to prior knowledge, participants reported that they oriented themselves to the task by establishing their confidence as writers or learners. The students in this study who had high self-efficacy also tended to have other facilitative dispositions and their high self-efficacy mirrored these other facilitative dispositions, especially self-regulation. David, for example, had high self-efficacy as a writer and both articulated *detections* of his prior knowledge in relation to new writing tasks and described high *self-regulatory* behaviors, such as goal setting and monitoring his learning as he engaged in *detection*. In high school, he discussed wanting to improve (monitoring) his score on the AP Literature practice exams (goal-setting). He said:

> …[S]he gave us an essay of what an ideal...what an 8...what a person got an 8 on and how a person got a 9, so from those essays I saw whichever one I liked the most, and then, kinda took their structure.

He carried these dispositions into college, where he continued to strive for high grades through self-regulatory behaviors, including applying new practices to his academic work:

> So one of the out of class essays wasn't really an essay…We had to write five annotations, so he makes us do them in a draft and then, he won't grade it, he'll just give us feedback and then he'll give it back to us and we can write it again. And for me this is completely different because I'm used to just doing one draft and saying oh well…I hope this is good enough…Cuz I don't even really proof read my work, so that helps a lot. So yesterday he returned it and I…I revised it

> so much I wanted to make sure that the content was good…I took out so many words so the word count dramatically went down, and, well, he gave me a B because he said it was too short. I was like...But he said I can rewrite it and so...I think...

David shows in this passage that he was thinking about whether his "content was good" in his revision—a new practice for him since, as he reported, he was accustomed to writing one draft and saying "oh well." David did go on to rewrite this assignment again in hopes of a better grade than a B (I discuss the particular goals that participants had for writing, including striving for high grades, later in this chapter).

For the five (of seven) participants in this study who reported high self-efficacy in writing and/or learning, each also designed and strived toward particular learning goals, sought help on their writing from both peers and experts, and reflected on their writing strengths and weaknesses after each writing performance. High self-efficacy was used by these individuals to initiate their learning, or was elicited concurrently with or prior to a *detection* of prior knowledge. These participants also showed high self-efficacy as they evaluated whether or not they would *elect* to pursue, apply, and/or abstract prior knowledge in new learning tasks, as described by David's idea of having writing strategies in his "arsenal."

For example, David knew that he had knowledge that could be adapted from prior contexts to fit the new learning tasks and writing contexts he encountered in his first year of college. In referring to his *arsenal*, he chose *not* to use a particular strategy—that of the introduction pattern he learned in AP Literature—but he was aware that he *might* need to use it again and that, if he felt the context was appropriate, he would do so. His awareness that he had particular strategies in his "arsenal" to use as he willed was related to his high self-efficacy. He *detected* connections to his prior knowledge and *elected*

whether or not to use particular writing strategies across genres and contexts—and those strategies were stored in his "arsenal." This application (or not) of knowledge underscores that willingness as part of writing transfer, that there is conscious decision-making occurring during the *elect* step for participants with facilitative dispositions.

*A mixed bag of dispositions and D-E-C:* Interview conversations with Julian revealed a different view of self-efficacy. He worried about his writing and reported that he did not like to write, yet he also reported high self-efficacy in learning and facilitative self-regulatory behaviors, including self-evaluation and help-seeking. Julian said that he used the Toulmin model for outlining and drafting his writing for college, which he had learned in high school. Julian *elected* to use this prior knowledge, though he also knew that he needed to modify that knowledge:

> Like the Toulmin model, so that's what I was coming in with. I used it to structure the essay, like an outline. I used it and then wrote around it. I used it to get quotes and support my quotes and to structure my intro. But when I went to write, I started to add more thinking.

Julian was able to *detect* prior knowledge that he *elected* to use, but in a modified way that fit the purpose and context for the transfer task. Like David, Julian made a conscious decision for *how* he used his prior knowledge during the *elect* step in the D-E-C transfer process. This was true for each of the participants with facilitative dispositions. Though Julian reported that he did not like his own writing, he also said that he "loved to learn" and that he liked the class content and instruction in the courses where he used a modified version of the Toulmin model. Julian's mixed bag of dispositions can be seen in this excerpt:

> I don't like rereading what I write, but I always do it. I always find mistakes and sometimes things that don't make sense. I also have had a friend read my drafts for me and she writes like so many comments.

Despite his dislike of the self-regulatory practice of rereading and evaluating his writing, Julian reported that he did it anyway. He also sought out a friend's perspective on his writing and also reported taking drafts to the writing center on his campus. In our final interview, Julian said: "I love learning. I do get mad when I find out when I'm wrong, but that's part of it." The relationship between Julian's low self-efficacy in writing, high self-efficacy in learning, and facilitative self-regulatory behaviors was interesting. It suggests that he had *enough* high self-efficacy to help his facilitate learning. He looked for *detections* to prior knowledge and *elected* to apply what was useful. Perhaps most important, he reflected on his writing.

These examples illuminate high self-efficacy as a powerful disposition for these learners, one that inspired other facilitative dispositions, especially self-regulation. This finding echoes Brent's assertion that individual reflection is a foundational to other dispositional qualities, such as "mindful abstraction" and "active experimentation," but one may also need self-efficacy to enact such qualities (413). This data points to the recursive nature of dispositions across tasks and time.

*Low self-efficacy and D-E-C:* Two participants in this study had low self-efficacy in learning and writing. This low self-efficacy mirrored other inhibitive dispositions. Komarraju and Nadler (2013) have argued that as a belief-construct, self-efficacy is "fundamental to the social-cognitive approach" to learning; it "conceptualizes individuals as being agentic, purposeful, proactive, self-evaluative, and self-regulatory" (p. 67). We might flip this argument around to its converse as well: *low* self-efficacy impacts learners' abilities or willingness to be "agentic" or proactive in learning and *inhibits* self-

evaluative and self-regulatory behaviors, as this research showed in the case of Sam. If self-efficacy is crucial in students' academic achievement, as much research has posited, a low self-efficacy in writing and learning, such as Sam's, can prohibit learners from crossing the bridges of *detect* and *elect* in successful ways.

Sam brought a low self-efficacy to the transfer context and he reported either *not* detecting useful prior knowledge at all or a low confidence in *electing* to pursue connections to this knowledge. Sam reported certain types of knowledge that he knew he *should* apply to the writing transfer opportunity (such as developing a thesis and adding transitions), but said that he had trouble with applying these tools to his writing or that he "never really learned how to" do them. Sam's low self-efficacy worked in relationship to his disengagement with school, where he reported not paying attention in class as well as playing pool or going to his cousin's house rather than studying. Perkins and Salomon argue that disengagement naturally "subverts learning opportunities, including connecting previous learning to the present moment" (p. 255). As Sam moved from high school to college and experienced different contexts for writing while in college, what functioned as cause and effect in terms of Sam's lack of academic success was unclear. Was it Sam's disengagement with school that fed his low self-efficacy, or was it his low self-efficacy that fed his disengagement? Data showed that high self-efficacy indicated high self-regulation, which fed back into self-efficacy. The same might be said for low self-efficacy, which emphasizes again the recursive and reinforcing nature of dispositions across contexts. Sadly, when Sam attempted movement through the D-E-C-*Enculturation* spiral, he repeatedly stalled out at the *detect* or *elect* steps and this stalling out mirrored the inhibitive attitudes and behaviors toward academic learning that he

reported across the high school to college transition. Such stalling out before *connection* reinforced Sam's inhibitive dispositions. This may be a "problem of previously ingrained responses and other motives hijacking the desired transfer," as Perkins and Salomon have argued (2012, p. 255).

Sam seemed *not* to detect what did *not* work in terms of his knowledge and behaviors toward learning that might have informed his movement toward increased success. That is, he was aware of his habits of dispositional response, but he did not report awareness that these habits contributed to an outcome of low achievement. He twice reported "liking" his drafts *before* the instructor provided feedback—and then revised his opinion of them as "horrible" once he received it. What is interesting here is that Sam had inhibitive dispositions that may have blocked his *detection* of both his prior knowledge and pieces of new knowledge; he might have used such prior knowledge (if he had it) to be more successful in writing first or subsequent drafts. There are two possible approaches to explaining how Sam's dispositions worked in relationship to his lack of development as a writer. First, Sam may have somehow missed "initial" learning, where particular knowledge or practices did not attach as "deep structures" to his schema (Perkins and Salomon, 2012). Thus, he could not build the cognitive bridges that would allow him to *detect* connections to prior knowledge. This potential absence in prior knowledge may have contributed to his low self-efficacy. But a second possible explanation is that Sam had "entrenched ways of responding," or to use Bourdieu's term, a *habitus,* grounded in former (and powerful) social contexts in which he participated (his family context may have been one of these). These entrenched—and habitual—responses impeded Sam's ability to assimilate new learning or detect appropriate prior

knowledge when he moved across contexts. I argue that this second explanation seems more appropriate to Sam's case, since, in our conversations, Sam talked about fighting often with his father and other problems between his parents at home. He also talked about his tendency to get angry easily, and shared regret and frustration about social encounters that had occurred in high school. While these parts of our discussions were quite personal and did not *specifically* reference Sam's dispositions toward *writing* tasks nor help me understand *what* prior knowledge he *detected* and *elected*, they may provide some insight into his patterns of habituated dispositional response to academic writing tasks.

Sam—and all of the participants in this study—brought more to transfer opportunities than simply their *dispositions* toward them. In fact, they brought all of the individual stories and experiences that had constructed their dispositions over time. Driscoll and Wells, in summarizing the ways that research has explored literacy development, suggest that the field of writing studies has more recently showed an understanding that literacy development is not just "something that takes place primarily within the educational context of the classroom, [but is] something impacted by the individual's experiences outside of the classroom" (p. 2). These outside-the-classroom experiences inform learners' general dispositions, which are constructed by and through their histories and primary influences, including education and family contexts. Wardle's (2012) summary of Bourdieu's term *habitus* helps illuminate this idea: individuals in any learning context bring with them combinations of experience, artifacts, and actors: *Habitus* is a "set of dispositions" that "'provides individuals with a sense of how to act and respond in the course of their daily lives. It "orients" their actions and inclinations without strictly

determining them.'" (Wardle, p. 4).

Thus, *habitus* informs literate action (or, as was often the case for Sam, inaction). Prior and Shipka argue that a moment of transfer as literate action—successful or not—can be described through the phenomenon of *chronotopic lamination,* which exposes

> the dispersed fluid chains of places, times, people, and artifacts that come to be tied together in trajectories of literate action"; it is "nothing less than ways of being in the world, forms of life. It is about histories (multiple, complexly interanimating trajectories and domains of activity), about the (re) formation of persons and social worlds, about *affect* and *emotion*, *will* and *attention* (p. 1, 3; emphasis mine).

For Sam, his *habitus*—as, in part, low self-efficacy in learning and writing—was an element that informed his degree of *will* and *attention* to opportunities for writing transfer. He seemed to avoid or resist taking writing transfer opportunities, but these moments of potential transfer were bound up in his personal history and were tied to his dispositions.

In terms of *elect,* Perkins and Solomon point out that the word itself implies *choice.* Sam's low self-efficacy and low self-regulatory behaviors may have, to use Perkins and Salomon's term, "hijacked" the desired transfer. For Sam, this happened both at the *detect* step, when he reported that he did not see connections to prior knowledge *and* at the *elect* step, when Sam *did* see connections, but was not confident in his abilities to apply them. Sam's behaviors reflect Perkins and Salomon's contention that "although […]motivations and dispositions play a role in all three of detect-elect-connect, elect takes on special status as a pivotal point where the learner either moves forward or turns aside…It's not that the ideas have been forgotten or become obscure in a conceptual sense. Rather, commitment to them falters in the face of counterforces" (p. 255). Sam's *habitus* displayed some entrenched dispositions that interacted with transfer opportunities

in ways that impeded them. The relationship between individual habitus and transfer in Sam's case points again to the powerful influence of dispositions on learning. Driscoll and Wells have argued that theories of writing transfer have not always considered learner's agency as part of this phenomenon. They suggest that the learner has been characterized as a passive agent, as someone *to* whom transfer happens (par. 9). Sam was not passive, per se, but rather transfer was inhibited for him because he did not *enact* it through his agency as a learner; he did not demonstrate—or seem to *feel*—the types of self-efficacy and self-regulation that would enable him to do so.

These findings show that self-efficacy was a key for understanding how transfer was initiated and enacted for these learners. It facilitated or inhibited *detection* and *election* and was elicited as an antecedent to tandem facilitative or inhibitive dispositions. Such findings suggest that transfer research can benefit by turning additional attention to self-efficacy—its nature, how it is elicited in and by particular contexts, curriculums, and instructional approaches, and how—if it all—it changes. How, then, did self-efficacy and the dispositions it mirrored (high or low) facilitate *knowledge* transfer for these participants?

*Dispositions, Prior Writing Knowledge and Noticing the "Not Talk"*

In identifying that he had an "arsenal" of writing strategies that he could tap into when and if he *elected* to do so, David showed an awareness of how he did or did not use prior knowledge to fit the new learning tasks and writing contexts he encountered in his first year of college. In this section I discuss another important finding in this study: that *facilitative* dispositions informed participants' awareness of their prior writing knowledge

and these dispositions helped them to determine whether or not they would move this knowledge across contexts for learning and writing. However, these participants only reported particular *types* of writing knowledge; these were specifically composing practices or genre knowledge. Meanwhile, when they *detected* a connection to prior writing knowledge or practices, they did not always *elect* to pursue or apply this knowledge in the new writing contexts they encountered.

A determination of what prior knowledge they would *not* use references Reiff and Bawarshi's idea of "not talk" (2011). Reiff and Bawarshi found that the "identification of 'not' genres" played a significant role in indicating the difference between "boundary crossers" and "boundary guarders" (p. 328). In their study, boundary guarders tended to name fewer strategies than genres used in writing transfer opportunities and reported use of whole genres versus a range of genre strategies, while boundary crossers tended to abstract and adjust their prior writing knowledge to fit new tasks and contexts. In this study, the five out of seven participants with high self-efficacy in writing or learning reported similar boundary-*crossing* behaviors to Reiff and Bawarshi's participants, including recognizing and discussing what genres they were *not* being asked to write in response to an assignment and reporting use of a "constellation" of strategies for reading and understanding writing prompts, drafting, composing, and revising strategies.

When David came up with the "arsenal" metaphor, he was describing his choice *not* to use a particular strategy for a research-based paper—that of the introduction pattern he learned in AP Literature—but he was aware that he might use it again at some point. The arsenal metaphor is quite interesting here, since an arsenal is a collection of things—most often weapons—to be used when necessary. The collection of strategies that David kept

in his “arsenal” echoes Reiff and Bawarshi's (2011) research on “boundary crossers.” David *detected* a composing strategy that he said was appropriate to one particular genre (literary essay), but not for another (research-based essay), so he *elected not* to use it. His strategies were in his “arsenal” if he needed them.

David’s ability to know when and where the introduction pattern might “fit” a writing context or task mirrored Reiff and Bawarshi's finding that boundary crossers often engaged in “not” talk, in which “students describe their written work (and writing processes) by explaining what genres it is not” (p. 325). David was aware that the introduction pattern was appropriate for literary analysis but *not* for the genres he was assigned to write in during his first semester of college. When I asked him to tell me how he knew how to write an introduction for his research paper on North Korea if he did *not* use this introduction strategy, he said he used knowledge learned from the teacher and the readings in the class in which it was assigned. In terms of dispositions, David consistently used self-efficacy and self-regulation to glean the expectations for writing in new contexts as well as to decide whether or not to adapt, adopt, or save in his “arsenal” writing practices and strategies. His facilitative dispositions appeared to enable him to be such a “boundary crosser.”

In David's case, I argue that as he took on new writing tasks in both high school and college his sense of confidence helped him to *detect* connections to his prior knowledge and apply them to these new tasks, if he *elected* to do so. However, Reiff and Bawarshi's findings identified confidence as an “early indicator” of a boundary *guarder*. In their study, Reiff and Bawarshi noted that boundary guarders approached tasks and described the key tasks of an essay task with confidence, yet these students also tended to guard “a

belief in the ready utility of prior knowledge and the low-road recognition of performing similar tasks in similar genres" (p. 325). Their finding does not match up with David's self-perceptions, in which he approached writing tasks and his knowledge with high confidence. When detecting, David assessed the expectations of new writing task and evaluated what genres and strategies he knew *and* he was consistently confident in his ability to write well in response to assignments. However, he was also willing to move away from his prior knowledge and *not* apply it if it was not useful.

Julian, who had mixed dispositions, including an enthusiasm and high confidence in his general approaches to learning but a low confidence in his writing abilities, was a "boundary crosser" as well. Like Reiff and Bawarshi's boundary crossers, Julian reported feeling "lost" at points when determining expectations for writing, what Reiff and Bawarshi coded as "defining the key tasks" of writing assignments. For Reiff and Bawarshi's participants, as they "exhibited less confidence, they were increasingly mindful of the need for reinventing and reimagining strategies" (p. 326). Like these students, Julian modified his knowledge of the Toulmin model, a scripted, five paragraph format for writing that he had learned in high school. But he also knew that he needed to reimagine this knowledge in the college writing context, since his teacher told him to abandon such formats:

> [S]o he told us with high school that you learn the five-paragraph essay. He went crazy, he's like, "That's wrong! That's just for exams." He took us away from that kind of thinking, where even a paragraph could be one sentence. He told us to "write the way you see." It was pretty weird the way he taught, but I liked it.

Julian reported trying the new approaches to writing that his instructor promoted, yet still showed a willingness to abstract his knowledge of previous composing practices to fit the

new task. At the same time, he constantly worried about his writing abilities while continuing to maintain that he "loved" learning. This example matches up closely to Reiff and Bawarshi's definition of the type of student who is a boundary crosser.

Both the cases of David and Julian indicate that high self-efficacy might be more facilitative of high road transfer. However, a high confidence in one's *abilities* to write well, as David had, may not be the same as confidence in writing well in particular genres. David did describe a high level of confidence in writing in particular genres in our interviews, including argument, literary analysis, and research paper, but he also used his high self-efficacy to take on unfamiliar tasks and genres as well. Reiff and Bawarshi's findings show that:

> ..."boundary crossers" reported more willingness to *shift away* from the writing experiences with which they felt comfortable, confident, and successful. Our "boundary crossers" are students that Sommers and Saltz (2004) would term productive "novices." Though they were not as certain of the task facing them in their first major papers and what previous writing experiences would serve them best in the new task, they appeared willing to assume a learner's role. (emphasis mine) (p. 330)

Both David and Julian reported such a *shifting away* from previous writing experiences. In light of this conceptualization of how prior knowledge does *not* move (or is *shifted away* from) into new contexts, both David and Julian are boundary-crossers. They each reported dispositions and attitudes that were consistent with a "'crossing' stance-- the willingness to deploy, transform, and even *abandon* existing discursive resources" (p. 330, emphasis mine). The key here, in terms of these two participants' interview data, may be that each had *enough* confidence in himself and his writing or learning abilities—each had enough facilitative self-efficacy—to take a *novice* stance when they encountered new and different contexts for writing throughout college. David in particular seemed to be aware that he was on a trajectory of expertise as a writer. He

looked for expert examples of writing and used and adapted strategies and approaches specific to particular contexts. He also implied that he was looking to learn more, to add more to his "arsenal." He continued to look for the "whole package in writing."

The importance of David's and Julian's dispositions in their roles as boundary crossers, roles that are important to examine as students experience different degrees of success in transfer knowledge across contexts, illustrate the need to attend to the ways that these roles were facilitated and constructed, in part, via their dispositions. This research illustrates the importance of a specific focus on dispositions across "consequential transitions" of transfer. By focusing more specifically *on* dispositions, this study suggests that research like Reiff and Bawarshi's, while providing important data that reveals *what* transfers—and even the ways that confidence factors into this transfer—can be expanded to highlight the dispositional aspects of this phenomena. This is particularly relevant when we look at writers "in the wild," as Perkins and Salomon have articulated. Still, dispositions in this study were viewed in relationship to *knowledge* transfer. A consideration of the types of knowledge that participants *detected* and *elected* to pursue can provide further insight into how dispositions can be tapped when instructors seek to facilitate writing knowledge transfer and/or address gaps in prior writing knowledge.

*Types of detected prior writing knowledge:* A point to notice in relation to the ways that dispositions interacted with D-E-C-*Enculturation* in this study is that when participants *detected* prior knowledge in response to a new writing task, and when they reported purposefully *electing* to use—or *not* use—such prior knowledge, they primarily reported two types of writing knowledge. First, they noticed connections to *writing*

*process knowledge* and second, to *genre knowledge.*

I used Anne Beaufort's five domains for writing knowledge to categorize and code for the types of writing knowledge that participants reported. I have defined each of these types of knowledge, via Beaufort, in different sections of this text, but here want to point out that, as she argues, these types of writing knowledge are "common knowledge domains" within which writers *must* develop context-specific knowledge (p. 17). Participants predominantly reported two of these five types of writing knowledge: *writing process knowledge* and *genre knowledge*. *Rhetorical knowledge* was reported minimally in Phase I of this study, while participants did not report instances of *discourse community knowledge* and *subject matter knowledge*. The number of reported *detections* across these knowledge domains in this study was obviously imbalanced.

In terms of the types of writing knowledge they *did* report, all seven participants described *detections* of prior *writing process* knowledge, primarily in relation to composing strategies. Participants reported whether or not to pursue—or *elect* to make—connections to this writing process knowledge in different ways. David and Julian, for instance, elected to abstract or *not* use prior writing process knowledge. David chose *not* to use his prior knowledge of an introduction composing strategy; Julian modified his prior knowledge of the Toulmin model. Lily and Soren reported using annotations in their course readings (a practice learned in high school) to inform their analytical writing. Others composing practices that were *detected* and *elected* (or not) included methods for writing introductions, integrating quotes, essay structures and protocols for analyzing writing prompts.

Five participants' comments about prior *genre knowledge* emphasized their

understanding of the literary essay structure and format; all five reported *electing not* to use this format in response to college writing tasks, and all of these participants reported high self-efficacy in either writing or general learning. This prior knowledge awareness of the literary essay matches up to findings from various transfer studies exploring the transition from high school to college (Sommers and Saltz, 2004; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011; Robertson, Taczak & Yancey, 2012). Participants' *detection* of the genre of the literary essay—which they chose *not* to use—was not surprising, as this type of essay was repeatedly assigned in the AP literature curriculum and in the regular 12th grade curriculum at the high school that participants attended and it was often *not* assigned in their first year of college.

Two participants, Soren and David, reported applying a *new* (or at least previously not used) composing practice of writing multiple drafts. Both said that drafting was part of the expectations of their writing-focused course in college, so their motivations may have concerned meeting the expectations of the assignment in order to earn the best grade. However, both also reported *not* writing multiple drafts while in high school, and both reported that purposeful revision of drafts was "new" to them. Soren, for example, reported using drafting more meaningfully in college, where he viewed the experience from a novice perspective. In our first interview from his first year as a college student, when I asked him if he was encountering new things as a writer in writing assignments he'd worked on, he said, "Nothing yet, where I've found, like, this is out of my boundaries." Here, he indicated that the knowledge that he had had been useful, so far. The "yet" in his answer is the key to his awareness of his novice position; he was prepared that assignments might be "out of [his] boundaries" at some point. Meanwhile,

he reported an awareness of the differences across contexts and that new practices, such as drafting, were going to be useful to him: "I'm going to be drafting a lot until I become confident with my college writing." Although Soren reported a high self-efficacy in writing throughout our interviews, in this statement he identified that he *wanted* to become more confident in *college* writing. He showed an understanding that college presented him with different expectations where contexts, assignments, and strategies might be new to him, and where he needed to adopt the position of novice and be sensitive these differences if he wanted to meet his goals.

The lack of reporting across the full spectrum of Beaufort's five domains suggests that despite participants' dispositions toward writing and learning, especially for those with facilitative dispositions, they had gaps in their writing knowledge of which they were not entirely aware. This data suggests that such gaps in writing knowledge can potentially be addressed through the elicitation of facilitative dispositions, which helped students in this study take on unfamiliar writing tasks and new knowledge.

Because very few of the participants reported *detecting* prior rhetorical knowledge and because there were no reports of *detecting* subject matter or discourse community knowledge, I thought it was possible that participants simply did not report what they did not consciously perceive. The imbalance in the reporting indicates two potential explanations: either participants reported the *types* of knowledge that they had the most confidence in using *or* they reported the types of knowledge that were most entrenched in their conscious awareness. These may be two sides of the same coin. Whether the essence of this data concerns a more psychological confidence in one's knowledge or a cognitive consciousness of it, both point to *gaps* in terms of the *types* of writing

knowledge that participants' *detected* and *elected*. At the same time, the participants in this study with facilitative dispositions were able to take on unfamiliar genres, new college-level writing tasks, and generally enjoyed learning new things. These learning gaps may stem from gaps in the instruction that these participants have experienced.

These types of writing knowledge gaps have been indicated in other recent research, such as Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey's (2012) article "Notes toward a theory of prior knowledge and its role in college composers' transfer of knowledge and practice." They found that their participants "enter college with very limited experience with the conceptions and kinds of writing and reading they will engage with during the first year of post-secondary education" (p. 4). These authors speculated that college students' absence of prior knowledge causes them to "*take up* the new knowledge relative to the old" in different ways, including through failure, as in their example of Rick, who had to "rethink his understanding of writing" altogether (p. 4). But how does such an *absence* of prior knowledge interact with students' dispositions? If, as Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey suggest, and as these findings bear out, first year college students are missing the "conceptions, models, and practices of writing as well as practices of reading that could be helpful in a new postsecondary environment emphasizing a rhetorical view of both reading and writing," how might they best approach these new writing contexts and tasks from a dispositional perspective? For the participants in this study, a general self-efficacy in writing or learning, balanced with their understanding of their *novice stance,* were crucial.

The high self-efficacy in writing exhibited by David, Soren, and Lily and the high self-efficacy in learning described by Janice and Julian corresponded with the ways that

they identified genres and strategies to use and *not* to use. However, an awareness of individual *novice* stances—which positioned these subjects as developing writers—was also key, since they only reported *two* types of writing knowledge and had much more to learn. In moving on to other writing contexts in college, unless each maintained a novice perspective balanced with a confidence to apply new strategies or concepts and take on ambiguous or unfamiliar tasks, their individual advancement a trajectory of writing development might not continue. Facilitative dispositions, therefore, while useful in many ways when learning occurs across contexts, was not enough when there were gaps or absences in prior writing knowledge. The novice stance was also an important perspective for these participants. In terms of goal-setting, then, participants needed to have goals to take on tasks that might be outside of their "boundaries," as Soren articulated. This includes expanding their goals for writing beyond receiving high grades. Sommers and Saltz caution that "Students who continue to see writing as a matter of mechanics or as a series of isolated exercises tend never to see the ways writing can serve them as a medium in which to explore their own interests. They continue to rely on their high school idea that academic success is reflected in good grades" (p. 140). They additionally contend that "being a novice…doesn't mean waiting meekly for the future, nor does it mean breaking with the past. Rather, it involves adopting an open attitude to instruction and feedback, a *willingness* to experiment" (p. 134, emphasis mine). If the participants in this study become locked into practices that no longer serve them, they may not necessarily develop toward writing expertise.

Still, these five participants used their self-efficacy to face new college writing tasks, which included adapting prior knowledge, as Julian did by modifying the Toulmin model.

Sam and Andrew, on the other hand, may have been locked into *dispositions* that inhibited them from seeing themselves as novices and which inhibited their writing development. While both reported "liking" college, this affinity was characterized as the personal freedom it offered as compared to high school and the social opportunities available to them. During his first interview while in college, Andrew reported that he was "learning a lot of new things about life and success" and that he was "learning new content," but he also reported struggling with writing, completing assignments, and attending classes. Sam reported that he enjoyed making new friends in college, but also said that he didn't pay attention in class and described two essays that he submitted as "horrible." As new college students engaging a new institutional setting, but also engaging unfamiliar writing tasks and contexts, their awareness of their *novice* stance as academic writers might be described as negative—or even absent. Their inhibitive dispositions, especially low self-efficacy and self-regulation, corresponded with what appeared to be an unwillingness to *detect* ways to use prior writing knowledge or explore the potential of applying it. Feedback on his writing was especially perplexing to Sam; he liked his drafts before receiving feedback; then, when asked to revise or reconstruct his written work, he viewed his writing as "horrible."

Both Sam and Andrew continued to view writing and learning through the types of dispositions that inhibited their academic progress in college; this was demonstrated both in their attitudes and behaviors toward writing in college and through a lack of willingness to engage in the academic contexts in which they found themselves. As Sommers and Saltz found in their study, "[t]hose freshmen who cling to their old habits and formulas and who resent the uncertainty and humility of being a novice have a more

difficult time adjusting to the demands of college writing" (p. 134). Since Sam and Andrew reported low self-efficacy and self-regulation in both high school and college, they each may have carried entrenched and inhibitive habits of response across this transition that impacted their opportunities to transfer prior knowledge and apply new knowledge, even if they may each have taken on the novice stance. As is evident here, dispositions cannot exist without a context in which to situate them. Could elements of the academic college contexts they encountered have helped them change these entrenched dispositions, including particular instructional approaches? How did Sam and Andrew's inhibitive dispositions—and the other participants' facilitative dispositions—interact with the different college classroom contexts in which they participated? In the final section of this discussion, I suggest that the findings in this study show that there is a dynamic relationship between individual dispositions, academic contexts and a D-E-C-*Enculturation* process of transfer. For the participants in this study, dispositions shifted as individuals' interpreted and became sensitive to each specific learning context.

*Habitus, Field, and Transfer: Amplified and Diminished Dispositions in Context*

Findings from this study showed that self-efficacy had a particular importance and power for learners in determining their success in the D-E-C-*Enculturation* experience of writing transfer. They also revealed different ways that high and low self-efficacy and self-regulation interacted with different elements of the first-year college experience: how and whether participants applied prior knowledge, what types of prior knowledge they applied or not, and how the novice stance interacted with their senses of self-efficacy. There are two other dispositions that learners exhibited in this study in

relationship to their writing transfer opportunities: *expectancy value,* defined as how particular values are ascribed to tasks or contexts and how they impact motivation; and *attribution*, in which learners rationalize an either internal or external locus of control concerning their degree of success or failure in completing a learning task or gaining new knowledge. These two additional dispositions were elicited differently in and responsive to specific contexts for learning. These dispositions also have recursive relationships with self-efficacy and self-regulation.

If participants carry their dispositions into and out of contexts, how do *specific* contexts interact with dispositions and how does this interaction affect D-E-C-*Enculturation*? In the findings, when participants described what they noticed and interpreted about specific learning contexts, they were also describing ways that they experienced *enculturation* into them. Their interpretations of contexts predicted how they decided to participate with peers, how they responded to instruction, and the types of values they ascribed these contexts and the tasks within them. These interpretations also caused them to attribute reasons for their own success or failure in learning. Participants' sensitivity to context-specific instruction, content, assigned tasks, and peer behaviors worked in relationship to the ways that participants exhibited self-regulation and self-efficacy differently across contexts. Participants' processes in sussing out the dispositions of contexts (or *fields*) for learning describe another way that *detection, election, connection* and *enculturation* occurs. As participants detected similarities or differences between prior contexts and new ones, they determined the value of tasks and learning in relationship to their own goals. Participants attuned to contexts by assessing their personal goals and adjusting their dispositions to match expectations, behaviors, and

goals of each context, primarily in response to instructor practices.

This data suggest that there is a dynamic relationship between individual dispositions and learning contexts—or in Bourdieu's terms, between the individual *habitus* and the *field.* Wardle (2012) argues that, like individuals, fields also inhabit dispositions. Through preliminary findings from her research, Wardle suggested that "the interplay between the *individual* disposition and the *field* disposition is an ongoing case of production and reproduction with possibility for contradictions and constraints that result in modifications in dispositions of either the individual, the field, or both" (emphasis mine, p. 8—9). While my own findings did not discover (nor seek to discover) any changes in a field's (or learning context's) dispositions over time, they did reveal the ways that participants' dispositions shifted as they became sensitive to the dispositions of the contexts in which they learned and wrote.

Overall, participants' dispositions were stable across the high school to college transition. All students who had high self-efficacy in writing or learning maintained a general high self-efficacy in college; participants who had low self-efficacy in high school exhibited similar low self-efficacy in college. However, while their overall dispositions stayed consistent across this transition, findings also showed that specific contexts for learning and writing *amplified* or *diminished* their dispositions, particularly in relationship to instruction, the content discipline, peer behaviors, or a combination of these. In this way, participants' dispositions *attuned* to the individual contexts in which their learning took place.

Participants in this study who had *facilitative* dispositions described changes in them in response to specific learning contexts, which explains this *attunement*. The five

participants with facilitative dispositions all described overarching values for attending college, in particular attending and progressing successfully through college as primarily inspired by strong family and/or personal values in pursuing postsecondary education. But within the specific writing and learning contexts in which they participated—those college courses where they had to complete writing tasks—participants shifted these overarching values to integrate different and more individually constructed values that related to specific contexts and tasks.

When participants discussed specific writing tasks and their approaches to them, our conversations would often follow tangents that explored their instructors' personalities or methods of instruction, peer behaviors in the class, or their perceived importance of the task itself (often in relation to its impact on the final grade). One finding was that high self-regulation was *diminished* in cases where the participant ascribed a low value to the writing task or learning context. When value was lower, these participants also externally attributed any low grades or lack of success to the teacher's methods or approaches. David, who maintained a general high self-efficacy and self-regulation in both high school and college, even in the classes he did not enjoy, ascribed low value to some classroom tasks and contexts. In high school, he did not value tasks that he felt were a "waste of time" and he was sensitive to and critical of instructors who assigned "busy work." He also did not attend two college classes that he felt did not require him to be there since the instructors in each did not know his name, nor did they interact with students in a way that David found satisfying. David did not value these courses enough to attend them, but also felt confident enough that he could do well in them without attending. But David's high self-regulation was *diminished* in the classes where he felt

did not need to apply it. He was more likely to copy off of his peers to complete assignments and save writing or reading assignments until the last minute in these college courses, though he did strive for—and achieved—high grades in both. Meanwhile, David showed a particular sensitivity to the contexts for learning in all four of his courses; in each, he described the instructional methods and his peers' behaviors as a rationale for his response to writing and learning tasks. For example, while he completed all of his assignments in his Asian American Studies class, he was annoyed that the instructor did not know his name, and that the instructor lectured the class without checking for student understanding. He reported when he *did* attend class, he would join other peers and watch "Family Guy" in the back of the room.

Early in the semester in this course, David described a detachment of the teacher from the class. When I clarified that this was a large lecture class, where it was quite unlikely that the instructor *would* know his name, and asked whether he worked in a smaller group with a teaching assistant, he described the TAs as detached as well: "You imagine T.A.s help you and stuff like that, I mean I don't need help, but I just, they're just there on the computers. I guess they grade the stuff for him...." David indicated his high self-efficacy again here ("I don't need help…"), but his self-regulation was diminished in that he did not attend class regularly and either copied or completed assignments with a minimum of attention and concentration.

David's sensitivity to contexts is another form of *detection* and *election.* David recognized similarities to and differences from previous learning contexts when he arrived at college. In high school, he had described classes where he was less interested and motivated to complete "busy work" that didn't require "quality." Meanwhile, he

recognized that his AP Literature teacher required him to work hard, which he said "gave me a bar" that allowed him "to see how hard I have to work" in college. David's sensitivity to learning contexts and *detection* of previous learning contexts indicated how he made choices that led him to be *enculturated* into them: he was looking for personal connection from his teachers—which he did receive from two instructors in college—and a rigorous emphasis on "quality" learning. Though David achieved high grades in two college courses, his experiences in them were *less* satisfying than his other courses and he felt more detached from the instructors, the class communities, and, in effect, the disciplines of these courses. His typically facilitative dispositions were *diminished*, and his *enculturation* into the class community was circumscribed by his experience. David's dispositions worked dynamically in relationship to these contexts.

In a similar way, Soren, who also reported facilitative dispositions across the high school to college transition and set high achievement goals at both levels, shifted his dispositions in response to specific contexts for learning. Like David, he was annoyed with one particular teacher's instruction. This instructor was teaching first-year writing, a course to which Soren had initially ascribed a high value and in which he reported wanting to do well. However, once into the semester, he described the teacher appearing disorganized ("Sometimes she seems like she doesn't know what she's doing.") and unaware of disruptive student behaviors ("She tends to ignore kids who don't pay attention."). Perhaps most notably, he reported that the class "never discussed" a book the instructor had assigned and which she required the class to use when writing an analytical essay. Soren reported that he stopped reading the book mid-semester and that he was unsure, at the course's end, if he had "learned anything new." His value in

completing the writing task in this course was low—as compared to the way he typically valued other learning tasks—and so was his typically high self-regulation. Furthermore, his self-efficacy as a writer, at least in that course, was also diminished, if slightly, since he was unsure if he had learned anything new. His *enculturation* into this particular context—and to college-level writing, since this was an introductory course—is problematic in this case. While his dispositions attuned to the situation (in diminished ways), his understanding of the larger subject matter—academic writing in college—had also not developed in a way he would have liked.

These stories point to the role that context plays in amplifying or diminishing dispositions. How might David's and Soren's experiences in these courses been different with different instructors or curricular approaches? The assumption by students that the instructor is the expert in the room makes these findings particularly important. Both Soren and David looked to their instructors for cues for the "rules" of the community and their dispositions and behaviors attuned to these rules. The theory of *habitus* posits that dispositions are individually interpreted and enacted through social processes of participation in communities. Lave and Wenger's (1991) *communities of practice* (CoP) model has expanded on this concept, contending that the specific contexts unavoidably bring to bear local and global beliefs, for better or for worse, upon the individuals that participate within them. Both Soren and David described ways that their dispositions shifted and adjusted to what they perceived were context-specific beliefs and practices.

Participants with facilitative dispositions did not always experience dynamically *diminished* dispositions in their college course contexts. They also had experiences where their dispositions were *amplified.* Both Lily and Janice had experiences where they

valued tasks highly *because* of the instruction and/or their high interest in the content. They described their high value for particular tasks as related to "good teachers" or "loving" the class. These amplified values caused them to work particularly hard on assignments in these courses, or show particularly high self-regulation, as when Lily ascribed extra time to revise her lesson plan or when Janice sent her art history papers to me to review.

For participants with facilitative dispositions, a learning context where dispositions appeared to be *amplified* was primarily described to have a "good teacher." A good teacher meant someone who made a personal connection with them, who put an emphasis on rigor and accountability, and/or who had an approach to instruction that pushed their learning forward. The opposite was also true: a learning context where facilitative dispositions seemed to be *diminished* had a more detached instructor, an instructor who seemed disorganized, who did not assign "quality" tasks, or who did not interact with students in a way that helped their writing and learning develop. This emphasis on "good" or "bad" teaching from these participants perhaps gives more authority to college instructors than they would like to have over students' behaviors. While participants also described their understanding that a difference between the larger high school and college context was that "you're on your own" in college, nevertheless, those with facilitative dispositions showed dispositional sensitivity to teachers and teaching across the high school to college transition.

Attributions (participants' rationalizations about *why* or *whether* they succeeded on particular tasks) were also ascribed differently in different contexts. When participants in the study ascribed high value to tasks or contexts, they tended to attribute their degree of

success in task completion to their own efforts, reporting "I really worked hard to earn that grade," or "I revised so much. I really wanted to do well." When participants ascribed low value to tasks or contexts was low or less important, they tended to attribute their degree of success to *both* their own knowledge or efforts *and* to an instructor's approach facilitating learning. This was the case with Soren, who reported dissatisfaction with his grade on a paper in his writing course, but attributed this grade to both his own efforts (e.g. not reading the book) *and* the instructor's disorganization, and failure to discuss the book in class.

These connections reinforce the role that *habitus* plays in the *enculturation* step of the conceptual model. *Habitus* concerns the ways that individuals interpret and enact dispositions, but these interpretations and enactments don't occur outside of contexts. Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* posits that dispositions are encoded and enacted tacitly and differently in and through individual participation in specific contexts or *fields.* In this way, the dynamic nature of dispositions is indicated as a social process of participation and harmonization—or *attunement*—to context. Such attunement helps enact enculturation to varying degrees. This data shows the different ways that dispositions responded dynamically, as *amplified* or *diminished,* to attune to specific contexts.

Some scholars have called individual dispositional attunement to contexts as "rule-following," but the way that individuals interpret and socially construct the "rules" is also related to their individual dispositions. In this study, participants' dispositions shifted or adjusted to the ways that they perceived the "rules" that guided behaviors and actions in particular contexts, but overall their dispositions did not change. For example, in David's case, it is likely that his Asian American Studies instructor (as the authority or expert in

the room) did *not* want students to skip class or watch cartoons in the back of the lecture hall. The "rules" for dispositional behaviors were, in part, constructed by the ways that individuals in class were sensitive to and chose to participate in this context. David's self-regulation shifted and *diminished* somewhat in response to the way that he interpreted the contextual rules, but he still maintained a high grade in the course. In this way, David's *habitus* was both flexible and stable in his experience of this course. Grenfell points out that "thinking in terms of *habitus* accentuates the sense of individual disposition[…]; and *field* allows for a mapping of ongoing organizational and consequential ideational forces at play" (p. 157). In David's case, after he assessed which practices and beliefs were valued in each of his courses, he shifted his participation and his approaches to learning in them. In effect, David negotiated his participation. Lave and Wenger (1991) have shown through the CoP model the ways that learners negotiate meaning through participation and reification of practices. They have argued that participation is a flexible experience where identities, influences, and interpretations help shape the meanings that individuals and communities enact. Participants in this study showed different ways that this negotiation occurs in classroom contexts; the amplification or diminishment of their dispositions interacted with their learning and satisfaction.

The conceptual model explains the intersection of CoPs, dispositions, and transfer and shows that D-E-C-*Enculturation* includes how dispositions, like writing knowledge, adjust across contexts. However, while dispositions can *inform* how and whether knowledge moves across contexts, dispositions *always* move across contexts and, for the participants in this study, their dispositions attuned to them. Participants reported that

they knew what a "good teacher" was, and often referenced Ms. C and one other teacher from high school as a "good teacher". What these participants perceived about good teaching was informed by *detected* similarities and differences to previous learning contexts, and they decided whether or not to *elect* to pursue similar attitudes toward writing and learning as those they *detected* in the current context.

One important note here is that dispositions were amplified or diminished for participants with *facilitative* dispositions. Sam and Andrew, the participants who carried low self-efficacy and low self-regulation across the high school to college transition, did *not* show much change in their dispositions in relationship to specific contexts. That is, low self-regulation and low self-efficacy continued to negatively interact with their transfer opportunities regardless of contextual sensitivity. It might be argued, for Sam, that his inhibitive dispositions prevented him from *detecting* the goals and values of the specific academic contexts in which he participated (however reluctantly). Sam admitted various times that he was "lazy," which can be described as an internal inhibitive effort attribution—though he also blamed having to drive one hour to and from school as prohibiting his studying (an external attribution). Meanwhile, in his writing-focused class, he was surprised when the instructor told him he had not responded correctly to a writing prompt and that he would need to do the paper again. Nevertheless, Sam reported that he "liked" all of his college instructors. Sam's low self-efficacy in writing and his reported laziness in completing schoolwork inhibited his learning across all of his college courses. These inhibitive dispositions as well as the way that he showed a lack of awareness of and motivation to meet expectations indicated that he was *not* sensitive to learning contexts. Sam's low self-efficacy may have inhibited him from recognizing and

adapting to academic expectations, rules and behaviors in the learning contexts in which he participated. At the same time, he may have been purposefully electing to pursue similar *field* dispositions to those that matched his desire for social play.

I argue that the concept of *habitus* indicates that individual and context are highly integrated—and that individual habitus shifts in response to context. As Wardle suggests, Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* can provide "a lens for understanding our students and their approaches to rhetorical problems without dichotomizing the individual and the context" (p. 11). Bourdieu also reminds us that, because individuals inhabit dispositions that are acquired through extended participation in fields that reproduce those dispositions, "entering a system with another kind of disposition altogether must be disorienting and difficult to reconcile" (Grenfell & James, 1998, p. 9). This mismatch between individual dispositions (i.e. not "liking" to write) and field dispositions (where writing was highly valued) can be seen in the case of Sam, where perhaps, he had high self-efficacy in other non-academic practices that were not identified in this data, and where, it was clear, he valued other types of contexts higher than academic ones. Noyes (2006) suggests that a disposition embodied by a family or a peer group may or may not match well with the habitus of the learning institution. Furthermore, in examining affordances in relation to dispositions, Bok found that individuals' "capacity to aspire"—a capacity that is intertwined with self-efficacy—is grounded in experience with local communities and families. It seems evident, then, that individual habitus is reproduced—as well as *amplified* or *diminished*—in *any* and *each* specific context in which learning is expected to occur. If this is true, there are additional implications regarding how researchers might examine and understand how and where dispositions are formed. It seems critical, for

instance, to understand how dispositions like self-efficacy in learning and/or writing are encoded in different contexts by learners, including family contexts and early education experiences. It is also be important to explore and understand the degree to which a field's habitus outside of school (e.g. the family habitus) bears upon a field's habitus inside of it (e.g. a classroom's habitus).

This analysis supports Driscoll and Wells view that "dispositions are dynamic and may be context-specific or broadly generalized." Sam's dispositions moved in a general way across contexts and did not amplify or diminish in sensitivity to them; in fact, they were inhibitive across academic contexts. For participants with facilitative dispositions, like David, while larger values about attending and succeeding in college did not change, dispositional responses to tasks and contexts shifted—or *attuned* to them. Therefore, in this study, while facilitative dispositions were fairly stable across the high school to college transition, they were also socially adapted and enacted in response to a *detection* of community values and an *election* of whether or not to pursue them. In looking across the data from all seven participants, the findings illuminate two important implications regarding how dispositions, transfer, and contexts work in relationship: 1) that dispositions are constructed and reconstructed at both local and global levels, and 2) that shifting participation across contexts and communities interacts with how dispositions facilitate or inhibit transfer. What seems evident from this study is that the degree of similarity or difference between the individual *habitus* and a given academic field's *habitus* predicts how and whether individuals move forward on academic trajectories, which returns us to the phenomenon of knowledge transfer.

*Limitations to the Study*

This study is ethnographic in nature and relies on self-reported data via surveys and interviews of participants' perceptions about learning, writing, and their dispositions toward them. While participant self-reports have been criticized as less valid and reliable than other forms of data collection, particularly due to factors that are difficult to control such as personality traits, Herzog and Bowman (2011) argue for increased research that uses self-reporting as a data collection method as well as studies of self-reporting approaches. They suggest that self-reported data is a useful method for longitudinal research, where patterns of consistency in self-reported data can be measured over time. While this project cannot be called longitudinal, it does study participants over time as they move across the significant transition of high school to college. In this project, since I am studying intrapersonal factors over the course of eighteen months, self-reporting was perhaps the only approach for getting at this type of data. In this case, self-reported data spoke to critical questions regarding the roles that dispositions played in individuals transfer experiences as they moved across contexts and this "critical transition."

While the final study presents in-depth analysis of the interview data, another possible limitation is that the seven participants all attended one high school in one particular geographic location and all come from similar backgrounds. It might be argued, for example, that individuals from this particular geographic location or who are of Hispanic backgrounds have similar dispositions; however, I argue that this is not the case, since their dispositions were highly individualized and their perceptions of learning contexts across the high school to college transition were unique and revealing in terms of how their dispositions facilitated or inhibited knowledge transfer.

Finally, it is both a strength and a limitation that this study presents only an actor-oriented perspective of dispositions. This strength involves hearing from these academic writers about their perceptions about learning and writing across the high school to college transition, and this examination of their self-perceptions provides insights into what and how knowledge and dispositions transferred across contexts. The limitation is also bound up in self-reporting. I had to trust that participants' interpretations of their perceptions and feelings held a veracity that impacted their learning experiences. To both test and address this limitation, it would be interesting to extend this methodological approach, for instance, by comparing the learner-oriented perspective to the instructor perspective or to observe actors in their communities of practice and connect their self-perceptions to their actions and practices. For now, an actor-oriented perspective helps to address the gap in the research that has yet to examine learners' dispositions, as Driscoll and Wells have pointed out.

*Conclusion and Proposed Contributions*

In my desire to explore dispositions in relationship to transfer and contexts for learning and in order to argue for a more complete and complex view of writing transfer that presents these elements in relationship, this research uncovers self-perceptions of seven individual learners in relation to writing transfer: how they talked about and applied dispositions as agents of their own learning as they moved into new post-secondary learning and writing contexts as first year college students. In interviews, I asked them questions that revealed their learning dispositions in relation to writing and learning—as well as in response to secondary and post-secondary academic writing tasks.

I explored the data to discover how and whether their dispositions transferred across the high school to college transition and the specific contexts within them, and how dispositions informed participants' transfer of prior knowledge and/or application of new knowledge.

Driscoll and Wells (2012) argue that research on knowledge transfer in writing studies could do more to "substantiate the critical nature of individual student dispositions in the transfer process," an urgent need since writing studies research has not fully explored the "complexities of learning to write as inclusive of its relationship to individual dispositions" (p. 11). To address this research gap, Driscoll and Wells have posed important questions for further inquiry: What is the relationship among individual dispositions? Are there certain "key" or "critical" dispositions for learning to write and transfer that can be generalized beyond individual students? How can individual researchers bring together theories of transfer that begin to account for individual dispositions in contexts? (p. 11-12). Through investigating and discussing the findings in this project, I provide some insights into these inquiries. A major goal of this study was to examine the relationships across separate theories of dispositions, writing transfer, and contexts to examine the ways that they work together to facilitate (or inhibit) learning. I have attempted to capture these relationships by examining findings as applied to the conceptual model proposed here. In order to begin to understand the relationships between transfer, dispositions, and learning contexts, the qualitative and empirical nature of this study presents findings that reveal the conceptual model in action from the actor's—or learner's perspective. This perspective allows a particular view of learning that includes learners' intrapersonal orientations to it that impact their

knowledge and writing development.

As recently as 2012, Elizabeth Wardle called for writing studies researchers to give "attention to the dispositions that students are embodying across fields and consider how the nature of those dispositions can either inhibit or enhance their ability to engage in the expansive learning and repurposing that I understand to constitute 'transfer' of writing related knowledge" (p. 11) and Driscoll and Wells suggest that transfer research can benefit from "an expanded analysis using a dispositional lens [which may lead] to additional insight into these students' struggles to transfer learning effectively" (p. 11). I have attempted to apply such a dispositional lens to writing transfer as it occurs in specific contexts for learning.

Ultimately, this study shows different ways that individual learners used their dispositions to inform their opportunities to transfer knowledge and how their dispositions were elicited in relationship to specific contexts. It also considered participants' dispositions toward writing as they moved on particular trajectories toward or away from writing expertise across the high school to college transition. Furthermore, it views dispositions through a model of transfer that looks not only at what prior knowledge students *connect* to new writing tasks and contexts, but also to *how* they *detect* and *elect* to pursue their connections to prior knowledge and how they are *enculturated* into academic communities. Thus, in pursuing research on the relationship between dispositions and transfer, I have attempted to locate *where* learning dispositions factor in the student's experiences and perspectives of transfer using the *detect-elect-connect* framework, to which I have added the fourth step of *enculturation*.

As extensive research on dispositions leading up to this project has argued,

dispositions are always elicited in particular *contexts*. But, as this research also shows, dispositions can work broadly as they are carried into and out of contexts by individuals. Contexts also embody particular conditions and dispositions of *field* to which individual dispositions *attune*. This concept of individuals' attunement to communities or contexts for learning reveal the shaping and constructing nature of context and how individual dispositions may be enacted in learning or writing transfer. In terms of researching and understanding how *attunement* occurs, the Bourdieuian concept of *habitus* is useful, since it "entails a shift in thinking where practical problems are thought through relationally in terms which involve habitus and field […and…] which should not be regarded as an end in themselves. Their boundaries should be kept soft as we use them to represent the surface structure of the logic of practice governing social processes" (p. 157).

In essence, the discovery and evaluation of prior knowledge by individual writers includes their agency and dispositional orientations to this practice, but dispositions and prior knowledge are also elicited in specific ways within the contexts in which transfer is expected to occur. Ultimately, teachers and researchers of writing should continue to examine the connections between dispositions, contexts, and a D-E-C-*Enculturation* view of transfer, like those presented here, to more deeply consider the roles that dispositions play in writing transfer. While theories concerning the connection between writing transfer and dispositions have been initially explored (Driscoll and Wells, 2012; Wardle, 2012), this connection has not yet been empirically and comprehensively examined. This project attempts such empirical and comprehensive examination of these connections.

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Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions: Phase I/ Interviews 2 and 3

Interview 2/ Phase I

- Tell me about your level of curiosity when you need to explore a new topic in school.
- Tell me about your process for coming up with research questions or thesis statements for writing. What do you like about it? What don't you like?
- Are you satisfied with the grades you get on written work in high school classes? Are you satisfied with your grades in courses overall?
- What do you tend to do when you don't understand something?
- What resources do you turn to if you want to improve your writing skills, if any?
- What were your first impressions of the writing expectations for 12th grade English class/ AP Lit? Other classes?
- When you find an assignment challenging, what do you usually do?

Interview 3/ Phase I

- How do you think college writing and high school writing will be similar? How will they be different?
- Which high school classes do you think have prepared you most for college-level writing? How so?
- Overall, do you consider yourself a good writer?
- How are you feeling about your classes this semester as a 12th grader? Tell me about your classes, in general.
- How do you feel about yourself as a writer?
- How are you feeling about yourself as a student at this point?
- What do you feel like you still need to know about writing?
- What's the most important thing you've learned about writing?

Appendix B: Survey Questions: Ends of Phases I and II

Critical Openness

1. I usually try to think about the bigger picture when I'm writing a paper about a topic.
2. I often use new ideas when I'm writing a paper for school.
3. I use more than one source to find out information for myself.
4. I am often on the lookout for new ideas.
5. I sometimes find a good argument that challenges some of my firmly held beliefs.
6. It's important to understand other people's viewpoint on an issue.
7. It is important to justify the choices I make.

Reflective skepticism

1. I often re-evaluate my writings so that I can learn from them.
2. I usually check the credibility of the source of information before making judgments.
3. I usually think about the wider implications of a decision before taking action.
4. I often think about my actions to see whether I could improve them.

Learning orientation

1. I love learning new things.
2. I always look forward to learning challenging things.
3. Being eager to learn about different things is one of my strong points.
4. No matter what the topic, I am eager to know more about it.
5. Learning new things all my life would be fun.
6. I want to learn everything I can because it might come in handy some day.

Creative problem solving

1. Complicated problems are fun to try and figure out.
2. If given a choice, I would pick a challenging activity over an easy one.
3. I really enjoy trying to figure out how things work.
4. Easy problems are less fun than challenging problems.
5. I hate dealing with anything that is complicated.
6. I am good at making plans for how to solve difficult problems.
7. I am one of the smartest kids in my classes.

Mental Focus

1. I have trouble concentrating in my classes.
2. My trouble is I stop paying attention too soon.
3. It's easy for me to stay focused on a writing assignment.
4. It is difficult for me to finish writing assignments.
5. I keep my schoolwork organized.
6. It is easy for me to organize my thoughts.

7. When I need to solve a problem, I have difficulty knowing where to begin.

Cognitive Integrity

1. It is not that important to keep trying to solve difficult problems.
2. I only look for facts that support my beliefs, not for facts that disagree.
3. Thinking about other points of view is a waste of time.
4. I know what I think, so there isn't any point to considering other possibilities.
5. Thinking about what others believe means you cannot think for yourself.

Appendix C: Operationalized Definitions for Selective Coding Choices

| Code | Sub-codes | Defining Features | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Transfer/ Learning** | Detect | Evaluates connections to prior knowledge to the writing task | I learned how to get little pieces of information and just analyze them and see how they are related to a prompt |
| | Elect | Willingness to abstract prior knowledge or apply new knowledge | I've actually changed my writing structure. Specifically for the AP [exam]. I actually know the structure in my head. Um, I kind of copied it in a way. |
| **Application** | Connect | Applies prior knowledge to new learning context/ task | So that structure is still there. And it's been working, so don't fix what isn't broken. |
| **Enculturation** | Embodiment | Feelings of (dis)satisfaction, (dis)engagement, degree of curiosity with subject matter; feelings about learning | I'm really engaged in those classes because those are the ones that interest me. |
| **Disposition** | Self-efficacy | Beliefs about capabilities in completing a task successfully | I know the structure of writing pretty well. Writing is pretty easy.<br><br>I don't like making an essay from what I've read. I've gotten better, but I wouldn't say that this is my best type of writing. |
| | Expectancy Value | Beliefs about the context for learning or learning task | …the teachers seem like they don't care. |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Their interested in the topic, but their way is the right way. |
| | Self-regulation | Monitoring, directing, or regulating action toward learning goals. Delay of gratification, self-evaluation, setting goals, help-seeking, study strategies | Now I'm actually editing content. Not just grammar. This time, I was saying, I can make this stronger.<br><br>I want to see where I can go. I want to transfer and see what I can actually do. |
| | Attribution | Rationalizations regarding the internal or external reasons for success or failure in learning tasks | I'm just lazy. I don't really want to do work. I'm afraid of failing. |
| **Context/ CoP awareness** | CoP awareness: *Detect* | Recognizes similarities/ differences to other writing pedagogies, curriculums, or tasks; similarities to other (learning/writing) communities | I know I actually had to work in that class and I ended up getting a B, but how hard I worked allows me to see how hard I have to work here, kinda gauge…<br><br>He makes us do one draft and then, he won't grade it, he'll give us feedback and we can writing it again. This is completely different because I'm used to just doing one draft and saying oh well. |
| | CoP awareness: *Elect* | Willingness to practice similar attitudes toward learning/writing as | I never really took rough draft and final draft seriously in high school. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | CoP | |
| | CoP awareness: *Connect* | Moves on trajectory of practice | I learned that writing is subjective. I think that's an important thing that I learned in high school that applies to college. That if you can support your ideas, if you can support it, then go for it. |
| | CoP awareness: *Enculturation* | Embodies CoP's *habitus*; experiences "flow" or "felt sense" of satisfaction in learning | On the final paper and the paper before that, those were the two biggest papers and I got the highest grades on those papers. |
| **Writing Knowledge** | Discourse Community Knowledge | Degree of understanding overarching goals for communication; underlying values; disciplinary discourse | I had to use Excel and I had never used that as part of my writing before. |
| | Subject Matter Knowledge | Degree of understanding central concepts; frames for analysis; Approaches to applying genre or rhetorical knowledge | Not reported |
| | Genre Knowledge | Degree of understanding of standard disciplinary genres and/or their features and/or rhetorical aims | It was different because that was like analysis of literature and now this is more research based. |
| | Rhetorical Knowledge | Situational understanding; audience awareness; understanding of a text's exigence | Not reported |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Writing Process Knowledge | Degree of understanding of how to accomplish writing tasks; composing practices | That's something I learned this year, that you don't need to be so wordy…Now I'll got straight into the thing (intro). |